THE 10 COOLEST CARS OF 2025

BBC
TopGear
FEBRUARY 2025

DODGE CHARGER DRIVEN!
WITH NO V8! WAIT, WHAT?

WHAT'S PINK AND CAUSES MASS HYSTERIA? IT'S THE NEW JAG!

TURBO RECHARGED
500BHP, RWD... THE R5 TURBO IS BACK

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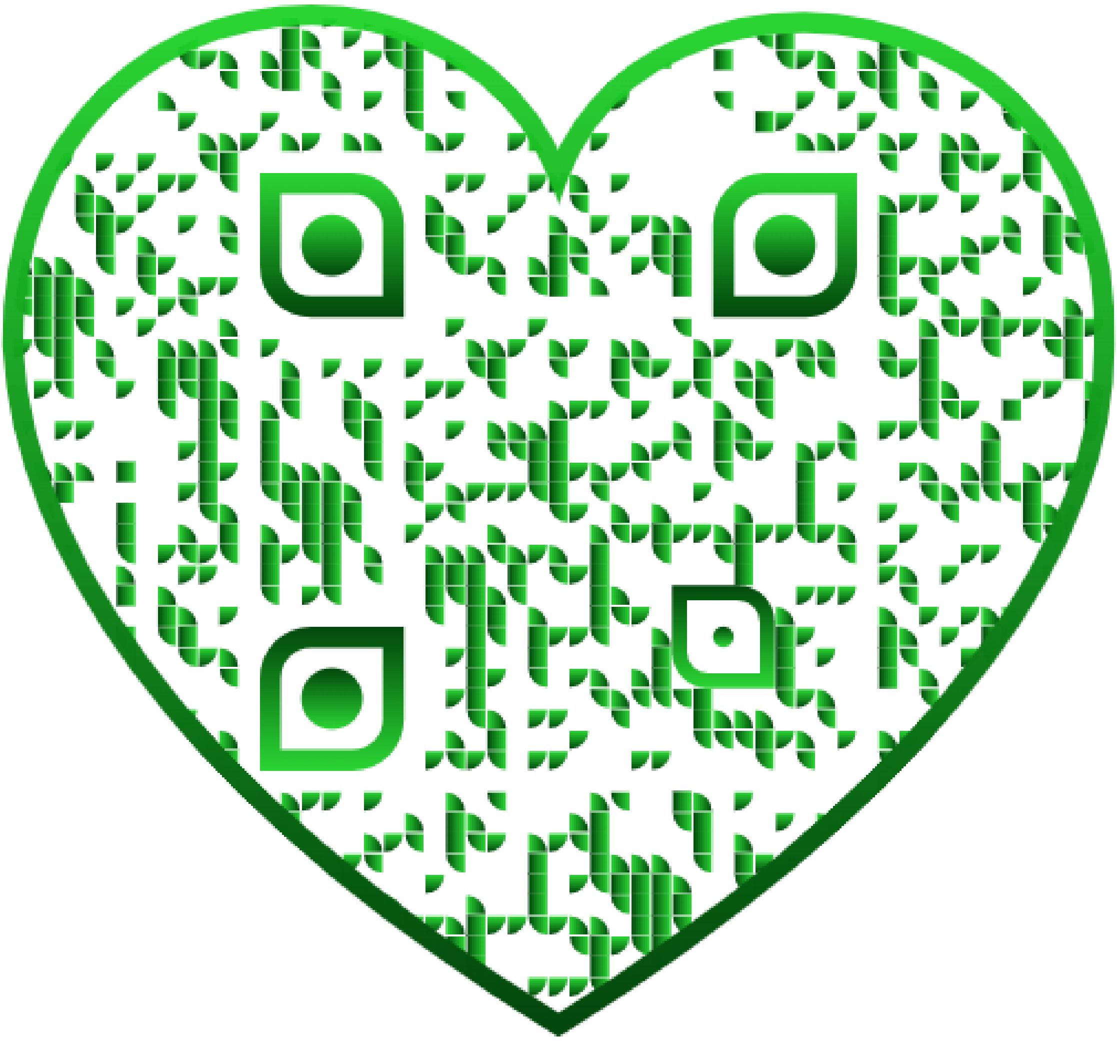
LAND BRUISERS
New Toyota Land Cruiser vs the off road establishment

AIR BENDER
Bugatti Mistral does 282mph, we get in the way

GOLDEN OLDIES
Four restomods, a perfect Italian road... if only they were finished

ASTON VALHALLA!

1,064BHP SON OF VALKYRIE IS A HALF-PRICE HYPERCAR



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Do your research

Christopher
Ward

christopherward.com

SCAN ME

JACK RIX

Editor-in-chief

𝕏 @jack_rix
@rixjack
jack.rix@bbctopgearmagazine.com

BBC TG Issue 392

It's been a tough month. The Rix household just changed its supermarket delivery service from Ocado to Tesco (the cost of living crisis is real – and yes I'm worried that my kumquats won't be quite as plump), but what I didn't do was stomp around the house swearing at my wife for giving our weekly groceries a radical rebrand. You can see where I'm going with this...

Everyone is entitled to their opinion, but watching the pile-on reaction to Jaguar's rebirth and subsequent Type 00 concept car has, at times, made it a bit embarrassing to be a human. Do I think Jag should be ignoring its entire heritage? No. Do I think the company needed a total rethink? Yes. My point is, none of us knows yet how the cards are going to fall on this marketing Hail Mary until Jaguar actually has a car to sell, so let's give the company a chance, rather than hurling abuse at a big pink car.

Besides, I had dinner with a CEO of a luxury car company recently who told me a contentious advert and concept car colour were the least of Jag's worries. The fact that it's committed to going all electric could be the sticking point for the whole enterprise. In the past year, he's had dinner with several hundred ultra luxury car buyers in America, Australia, Asia and Europe and not one wanted to go full electric. Of course, the Rolls Spectre has proved that when the product's spectacular there are always buyers, but even orders for that appear to be hitting the brakes.

Read Paul Horrell's interview with Jag MD Rawdon Glover on page 50 and you can hear the boss's defence. He reminds us that the production car won't be here until 2026, and then it has to stay on sale for eight years. As the clock ticks, luxury EV demand is only going to increase, he claims. Plus, powertrain is "about 13th" on the list of reasons customers buy a luxury car. Far higher on that list is whether the brand resonates. Ah...

EVs may be experiencing a little thinning of interest at the moment, but that isn't stopping manufacturers from piling in with more ways to make four wheeled boxes with batteries and motors that scratch a petrolhead's itch. A reincarnated Renault 5 Turbo? A Dodge Charger EV? A battery powered Porsche Boxster? Strap yourselves in, folks, 2025 is going to be controversial... a massive pink Jag is just the start.

Enjoy the issue,

CONTRIBUTORS

WHO: KATIE POTTS

Spends her day juggling *TG*'s social media, after hours Katie has a deep and passionate love of old BMWs (p137)

WHO: JOE HOLDING

The man behind *TG*'s hugely complicated car reviews schedule and logistics meets a man who built his own F1 car. In his shed

WHO: HARRY RUDD

Harry is a videographer by trade, but more than handy with a camera too. See his stunning Charger shoot on p58

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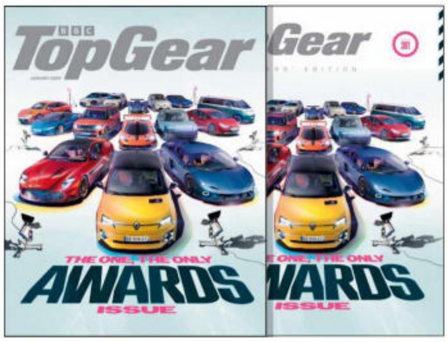
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BRAND MANAGING EDITOR Esther Neve
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EDITOR, TOPGEAR.COM Vijay Pattni
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STAFF WRITERS Cat Dow, Shafiq Abidin,
WEB PRODUCER Callum Alexander
HEAD OF CONTENT STRATEGY Rowan Horncastle
DIGITAL CONTENT PRODUCER Ben Pulman

ART TEAM
CREATIVE DIRECTOR Andy Franklin
ART EDITOR Elliott Webb

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS
Jethro Bovingdon, Mike Channell, Richard Holt, Sam Philip

CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHERS
Lee Brimble, Mark Fagelson, Jonny Fleetwood, Wilson Hennessy, Rowan Horncastle, Olgun Kordal, Jamie Lipman, Dennis Noten, Richard Pardon, Mark Riccioni, Philipp Rupprecht, John Wycherley

HEAD OF CLIENTS AND STRATEGY Phil Holland
CLIENTS & STRATEGY MANAGER Kit Brough
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REGIONAL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT MANAGER Tom Mallows
HEAD OF INSERTS Steve Cobb
SALES EXECUTIVE Matthew Wood
DIGITAL SALES PLANNING MANAGER Isabel Burman
DIGITAL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT MANAGER Lindsey Dobson

PRODUCTION DIRECTOR Koli Pickersgill
GROUP PRODUCTION, SUSTAINABILITY & ETHICAL MANAGER Jo Beattie
SENIOR PRODUCTION CONTROLLER Katie Panayi
SENIOR REPRO TECHNICIAN Darren McCubbin
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SENIOR AD SERVICES COORDINATORS Cherine Robins, James Webb
INSERTS COORDINATOR Agata Wszeborowska
NEWSTRADE MARKETING MANAGER Gareth Viggers
MARKETING MANAGER Laura Connaughton

IM CEO Sean Cornwell
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DIRECTOR OF INTERNATIONAL, LICENSING & TOPGEAR MAGAZINE Tim Hudson
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HEAD OF LICENSING Tom Shaw
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JUNIOR MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTANT Ben Simmons

BBC STUDIOS, UK PUBLISHING
GLOBAL DIRECTOR, MAGAZINES Mandy Thwaites
ASSISTANT PROJECT MANAGER Eva Abramik
COMPLIANCE MANAGER Cameron McEwan

SENIOR VP, DIGITAL [GLOBAL BRANDS & LICENSING] Jasmine Dawson
DIGITAL VP, AUTOS Chris Mooney

EDITORIAL REVIEW BOARD Alex Renton

WWW.BBCSTUDIOS.COM UK.PUBLISHING@BBC.COM

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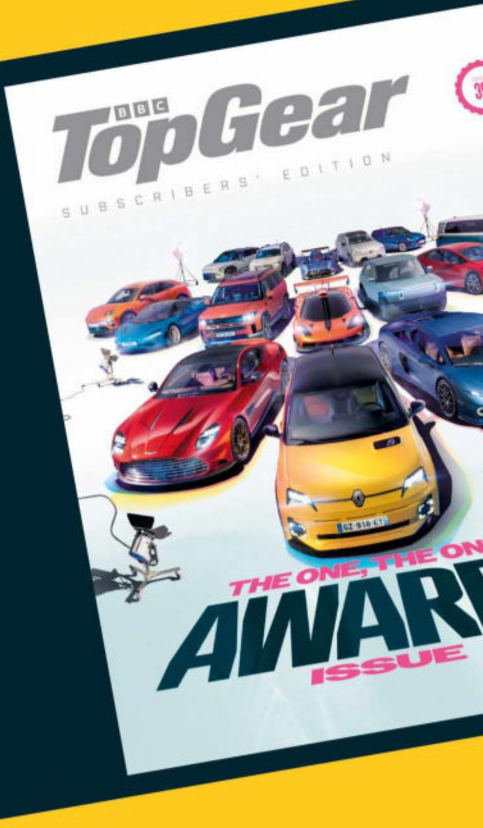

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TURN TO PAGE 138

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038 **ASTON MARTIN VALHALLA**
Aston's first plug-in hybrid arrived…
and mpg/efficiency doesn't appear
to be particularly high on the agenda

FEBRUARY

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MALLE RALLY

OFF ROADERS

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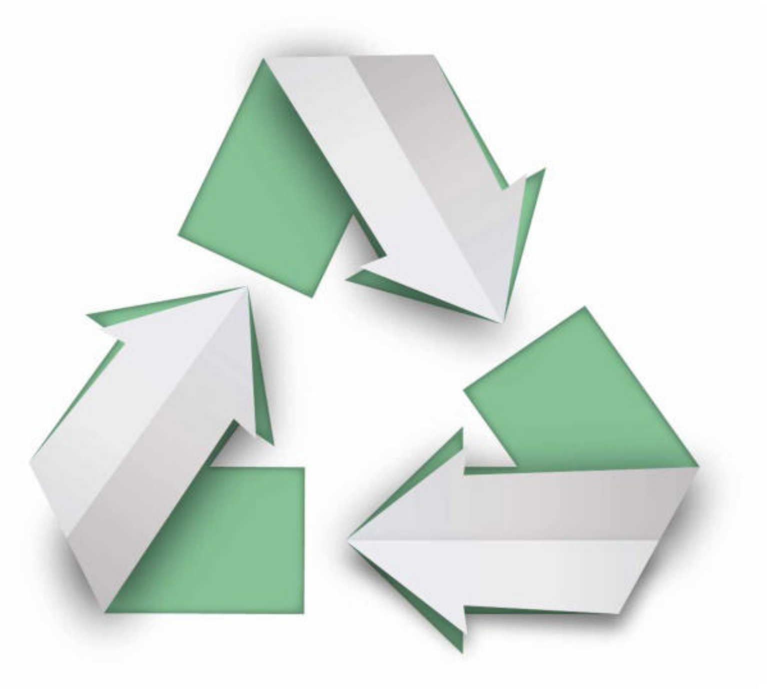
RESTOMODS IN ITALY

DIY F1 WHEELNUT



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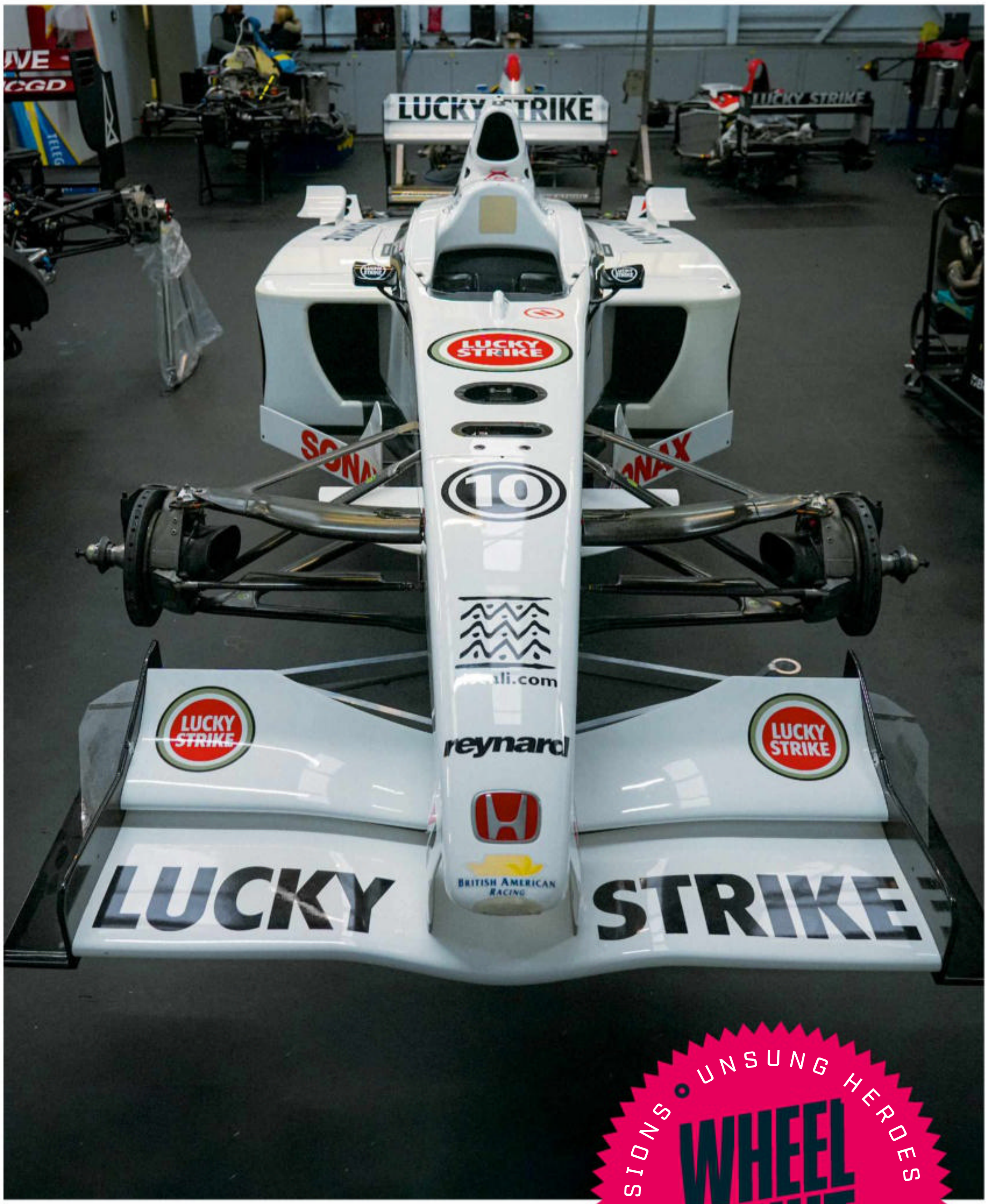


UNSUNG HEROES WITH UNHEALTHY OBSESSIONS

WHEEL NUT

The DIY F1 dreamer

Growing up, Dan Blythewood yearned to drive a Formula One car. Years later, hard work and a lot of cash mean he's doing just that

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY JOE HOLDING

Dan Bythewood always wanted to be an F1 driver and having spent most of his life chasing his dream, and 15 years rebuilding a BAR-Honda, it's nearly ready to race.

He grew up in Long Island in the 1980s but caught the bug for F1 on *Wide World of Sports*, about 40 years before Netflix made it cool. A self confessed "Senna guy", he couldn't wait to start driving. So under the pretence of visiting his grandparents, he flew out to Florida to get his licence two years earlier than was allowed in New York. Hey, if you see a gap, etc. Then he snuck out to his first track day in an MR2 Turbo… not knowing his folks were waiting for him in the pitlane. Uh oh.

To his relief they were supportive and encouraging. But however much he wanted to race, Dan knew that without millions of dollars to fund a junior career, making it to F1 would be impossible. So he knuckled down into the real estate world and set his heart on the next best thing: buying secondhand.

In 2009, he got his chance. When Ross Brawn snapped up the remains of Honda's F1 team for £1, he immediately ordered a clearout to raise some cash. Among the collection was a 2001 BAR-Honda chassis with its iconic livery, missing its original V10 but otherwise in good nick.

Dan offered to buy it before it went to auction, but he didn't just want the car. He wanted the *rights* to it. Why? "I didn't want a paperweight," he explains. "I wanted it to run so I could fulfil my lifelong dream of being in Formula One." That meant getting hold of a tranche of CAD files (and a letter from Brawn declaring it all legit) so he could faithfully recreate every bolt. And bring it back to life.

For that, he'd need an engine. Honda had no interest in supplying one, so instead he unearthed a 3.0 Cosworth LK V10 used by Jordan in 2003, which Cosworth itself then brought up to 2005 TJ spec for bulletproof reliability. "What was amazing is that the gentleman who originally built the engine was the gentleman who rebuilt it years later."

More complex power required a more complex steering wheel. A suitable donor was found on one of Jenson Button's old cars, but even that "took a lot of work because [it was] code protected, so we had to hack into the steering wheel to get it to accept all the new things we wanted it to do".

Then he found the 13in rims were past their use by date (who knew magnesium aged like milk?), so Dan had to source new ones. He needed three sets, but the minimum order for bespoke OZ Racing rims is 12. So he's got lots of spares. But the transmission, suspension, aero… that's all as it was.

After eight years of painstaking checks it was finally time for a test run. At an airfield

The ex BAR-Honda car was recreated over years thanks to this dedicated and diehard home mechanic

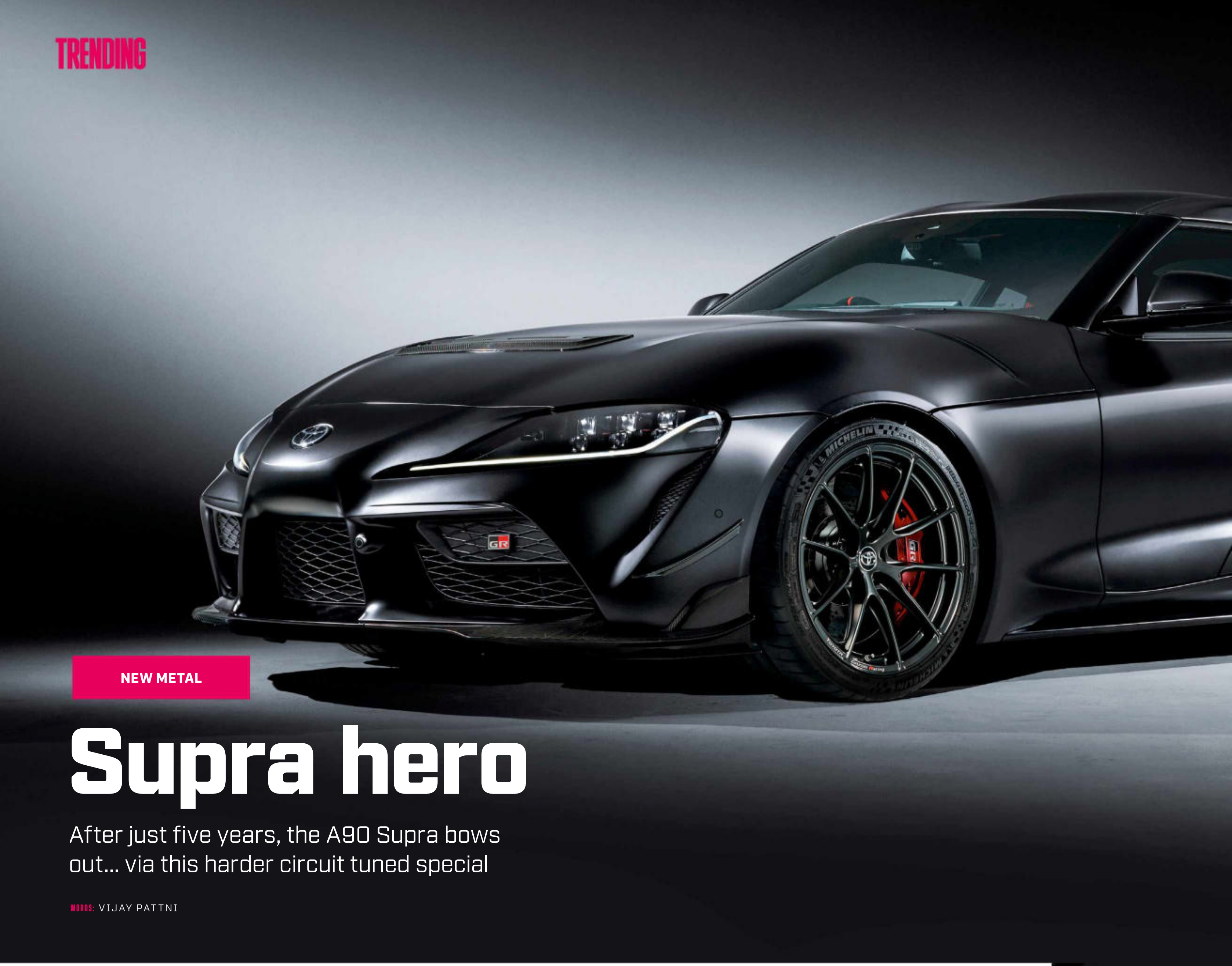
A plethora of buttons on the steering wheel, and still not one that works the heated seats

in Germany, because that howling V10 screams all the way to 150dB at 18,600rpm, shattering the noise limits at most circuits. When they fired it up, "it was shooting a three foot flame out both exhausts". Is fireproof ear protection even a thing? Despite some butterflies Dan recalls feeling Zen behind the wheel, the combination of decades of hard work coming together mixed with the thrill of "an engineering marvel" that surpassed everything he'd ever driven.

"There is *nothing* on this planet like a Formula One car," he says. "Your mind just can't fathom that you're going to live through braking 60 metres out when you're at 200 miles an hour. It's mind numbing."

After that the pandemic held things up, but there's not much left to fix. The basemap needs sorting – that might just be a rogue zero in the coding – and it turns out those flames were caused by 12V fuel injectors which were half the size required. Not enough spark to burn the fuel, you see.

But barring any more setbacks, 2025 is the year Dan fulfils his F1 dream. On proper racetracks, at proper speeds. "It would be cool for that one fraction of a second in time," he says. "But the journey is what's really so epic."



NEW METAL

Supra hero

After just five years, the A90 Supra bows out… via this harder circuit tuned special

WORDS: VIJAY PATTNI

FAREWELL, A90 SUPRA, WE… KNEW thee very well, actually. Because the reveal took seven years and arrived 21 years after the A80 dump-valved itself into the horizon.

Now, after just five short years on sale, Toyota has confirmed this jet black special edition is the last one. Hence why it's called the 'Final Edition', with just 300 available worldwide.

It's bowing out via a series of updates that draw inspiration from the A90's competition pedigree. Stuff like drifting, endurance and even NASCAR, as well as the championship winning GT4.

So it's more powerful. Much more powerful. That (BMW) 3.0-litre straight six – matched up exclusively to a (BMW) six speed manual gearbox – has been treated to a new intake air path and 'optimised' engine controls to somehow liberate a power boost from 335bhp to 429bhp and around 50lb ft more torque. There's also a new baffle plate to keep oil distribution steady "under high *g* forces", the cooling system has been beefed up too, and it gets adjustable KW suspension – with 16 rebound and 12 compression stages, just like the dampers you get in the race spec GT4 contender. Overkill? Nah. That's matched to new camber angles front and back, and 'optimisation' of the active diff to try to reduce understeer.

The electric steering has been tweaked, while the body gets additional scaffolding via aluminium mounts, braces, and stronger stabilisers. The brakes are mahoosive 19-inchers from Brembo. The tyres are fatter and grippier, wrapped around bigger lightweight wheels.

It wears a more aggressive aero suit too, with a carbon fibre front spoiler, canards, a swan neck rear wing, carbon fibre bonnet ducting and an Akrapovič exhaust. Naturally, there's higher spec stuff inside, like a set of Recaro buckets, red seat belts, carbon fibre scruff plates and Alcantara trim. No word on price yet, think at least £60k.

HIT or MISS

Two titans of the editorial team have it out

CAT DOW

TG'S STAFF WRITER RECKONS THIS IS A FITTING GOODBYE

With its sizeable power upgrade to 429bhp, track honed suspension, an unconfirmed but likely sub 4.0secs 0–62mph sprint time and a bodykit that screams Supra in a silent 'I'll let my exhaust do the talking' kinda way, the A90 Final Edition is spot on. It's almost flawless. Whether by fate or design Toyota's even left a little headroom for the modding community to do its thing. Since the 1970s, the Supra has epitomised power in a package that's easy on the eye. But all good things must come to an end, and with the Supra's cultlike following, goodbye was inevitable. Fortunately, the Final Edition has enough going on to keep the legacy of the Supra alive for a bit longer.

"The A90 Final Edition is spot on. It's *almost* flawless"

OLLIE KEW

TG'S DEPUTY EDITOR RECKONS TOYOTA SHOULD HAVE DONE MORE

And now the outgoing Supra has yet another thing in common with BMW – pathetic rear wings. Yes, it's the return of the E92 M3 GTS's apologetic aero to bum ratio here – did they get that off a Tamiya toy? Hard too not to feel this is a missed opportunity. Sure the power boost is chunky but why not go all in on the Bimmer connection and insist on borrowing the M2's twin turbo engine? The Supra's heritage is in boost and tuneability after all. And it's just so difficult to get gee'd up when there will only be 300 made, and UK sales aren't a given. With the GR86 sold out and the Supra bowing out early, I'd wanted a fancier final flourish.

"Did they get that rear wing off a Tamiya toy?"

Anyone getting Honda Civic Type R vibes in here? If only the Supra's manual shift was that sweet

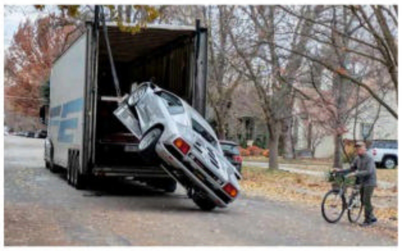
VIRAL

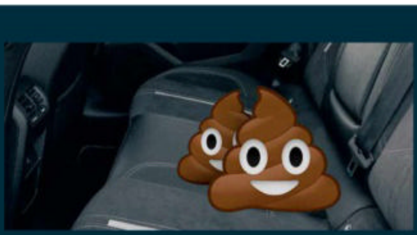
Around the world in seven questionable car stories

1. USA

Lambo Diablo falls off truck while being unloaded

A Lamborghini Diablo on its way to its new owner was left precariously perched after the hydraulics controlling the delivery truck's lift failed. Images show damage to the front wing, with a crane reportedly later called out to recover the car and prevent any more damage. The work of the devil...





2. New Zealand

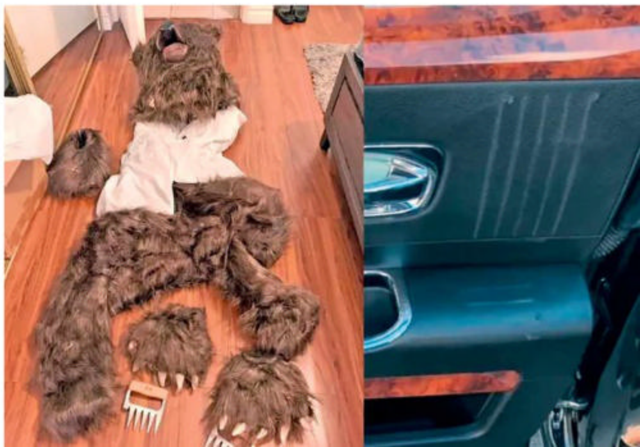
Dealer sends faeces pics after couple reject car

A dispute over a rejected car culminated in Chris Schwartz, boss of iSeeCars Ltd, emailing Johannes and Chizelle Cilliers two poop pictures after they took him to court. "Please see attached paid in full," Schwartz wrote. "Have a fantastic great day, I split it in two payment parts." We'll spare you the photographic details.

3. USA

Scammers dress as bears in luxury car insurance scam

Four people have been arrested in California accused of fraud after dressing as bears and damaging three luxury cars in an insurance scam. The fraudsters went as far as sending videos of the alleged attacks, with detectives later finding the costumes after arresting the quartet.



4. UAE

Russell vs Verstappen feud heats up in war of words

The F1 season might be over, but we can't see the beef between George Russell and Max Verstappen ending any time soon. It all boiled over in Qatar, when Verstappen told media he'd "lost all respect" for Russell for trying (successfully) to get him demoted from pole. Russell hit back in Abu Dhabi and claimed Verstappen threatened to "purposefully go out of his way to crash into me and 'put me on my head in the wall'", adding "someone needs to stand up to a bully like this". Yikes. No wonder he rejected the chance to sit next to Verstappen at the drivers' annual end-of-year dinner. Awkward. Just imagine the drama if these two are in a title fight next season.

5. Australia

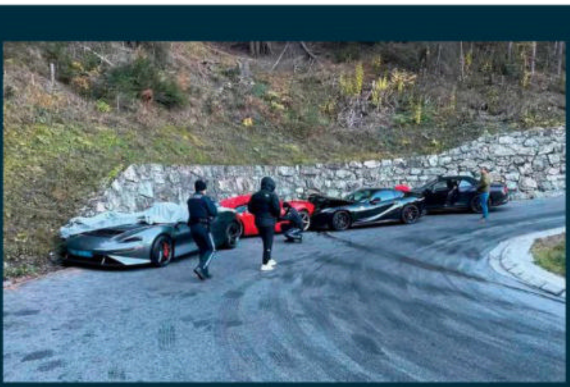
Lambo owner first to be fined for not having supercar licence

A Lamborghini Huracán STO owner is the first person to be fined in Australia for not having an 'ultra high-powered vehicle' licence, which was introduced in December after a 15-year-old pedestrian was killed in 2023. The licence is needed for any car with a power to weight ratio of more than 370bhp per tonne. You've been warned.

6. Sweden

Moose on the loose trashes old BMWs

A moose caused carnage at a BMW and Mini specialist in Sweden after working its way inside the building. The ingenious elk took out most of its frustration on a recently restored BMW 850i. Ouch.



7. Austria

Ker-ching four-car pileup on mountain road

A McLaren Elva, Ferrari LaFerrari, Ferrari 812 Superfast and Bentley Conti GTC were involved in a pileup after colliding on a hairpin. There goes the no claims bonus.

coffee break

What we're watching/listening/doing, while we should be working

***Inside No. 9: The Party's Over*, BBC iPlayer**
A decade of dark comic tales has ended, but fear not. Take a behind the scenes look at the making of one of the best original British shows to ever grace our telly boxes. We love a story with a shocking twist

Hurling the Silver Ball, St Ives, Cornwall
One for the children, this. On the first Monday after 3 February, competing teams of kids race around the town with the sole aim of keeping ownership of the Silver Ball until midday, when they can give it to the mayor and claim a prize. Insane? Yes. Fun? Inevitably

'All My Love', Coldplay
The director's cut of the music video for the band's new single features the awe inspiring legend that is Dick Van Dyke celebrating his 99th birthday and dancing barefoot. It'll keep you smiling for the rest of the month. Promise

Dry January
You could lay off the sauce for a month, which can be a good thing. But other 'dry' options can include testing your 'dry' humour standup routine, or, at the very least, towel 'dry' after every shower and bath

***Saturday Night*, in cinemas 31 Jan**
Jason Reitman directs this comedy docudrama following the 90 minute lead up to the first ever broadcast of the famed US comedy show *Saturday Night Live* in October 1975

PL▶YLIST

SCAN HERE TO FIND THEM ALL

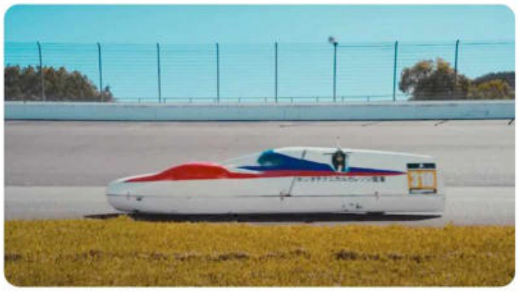
Procrastination ahoy! Six videos you need to watch now

STIG vs JESKO

What do you get when you put a 1,578bhp Jesko Absolut and a tame racing driving on the *TG* track? Easy – an elated and euphoric Stig... and a blistering new track record

HYUNDAI RN24

Looking for a recipe for future fun? We have it right here... take a decade of WRC rallying know-how, the Ioniq 5 N's powertrain and finish off with a large dollop of mischievousness. Bake for 20 minutes. Hey presto



CHILLED CHALLENGE

If you're feeling stressed and need to take some time out may we suggest relaxing with Honda's Eco Mileage Challenge. A full 2.5hrs of cars driving slowly around a track set to lo-fi retro beats. And breathe...

LET'S OFF-ROAD!

The new Toyota Land Cruiser faces off against key rivals – Land Rover Defender, Mercedes G-Class and Ineos Grenadier – in a cold and icy Wales. Expect punctures

DODGY CHARGER?

Is a muscle car really a muscle car without a brawny engine? The new Charger makes all the right (fake) noises, but trades V8 for EV. Suicide or smart thinking? Tom Ford takes a look

TO VALHALLA!

Aston's new mega bhp, V8 hybrid super/hypercar is here and it's about to make the McLaren W1 and Ferrari F80 look very pricey indeed... We take the full tour and meet the man who designed it

COMMENTS

JAGUAR TYPE 00

THE GOOD

This is not remotely boring. Setting the branding debacle aside (mistakes happen… calm down, haters) this new look is really solid! Show me more!

Matthew Smith TG

The final production model (if it ever gets released) may positively surprise people. I won't hold my breath, but I'm rooting for Jag

Murat Ince f

IT'S VERY BEAUTIFUL. Awesome job Jaguar. Fabulous

BlessBeNice TG

Overall, it's not that bad… in a world where a common criticism is "all cars look the same" refreshing to see something a little bit out there

Nikk MacRae f

I like it. I don't care that it's polarising – it's fresh and I hope that the real car is not too far away from this

Martrich1098 TG

THE BAD

This is a perfume bottle with wheels made by a six-year-old in *Minecraft*

Robzam TG

HAS IT BEEN MADE WITH AN AXE?

Irfan Ismic f

£00 IS HOW MUCH PROFIT THEY'LL MAKE

Steve Stone f

Baffling

Justin J TG

Walking remains an option

Marco Moioli f

THE UGLY

If I had the money, I'd buy this, just to drive it into a lake or canal

Luc Robertson f

A brick on four wheels. Who would have thought the car would be a disaster after that rebrand?

Luke Duraj f

IF THIS IS THE FLAGSHIP FOR THEIR REBRANDING, IT MIGHT BE TIME TO RING THE DEATH BELL FOR JAG

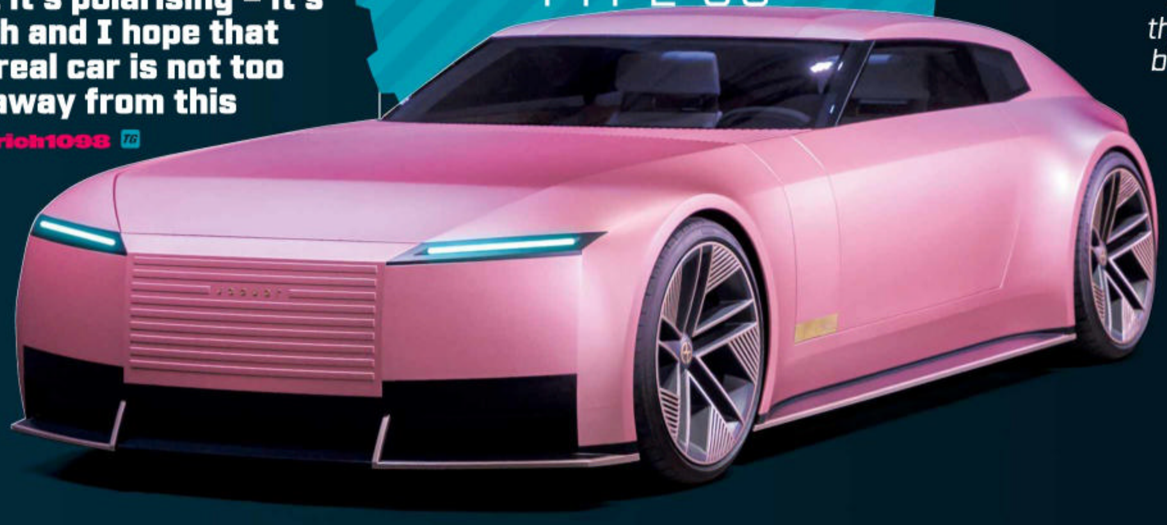
FWD_to_twin_turbo TG

An absolute ruination of an iconic brand!

TJ Flood f

Looks like a chihuahua was constipated and they gave it pepto bismol and boom. Here's our next design guys!

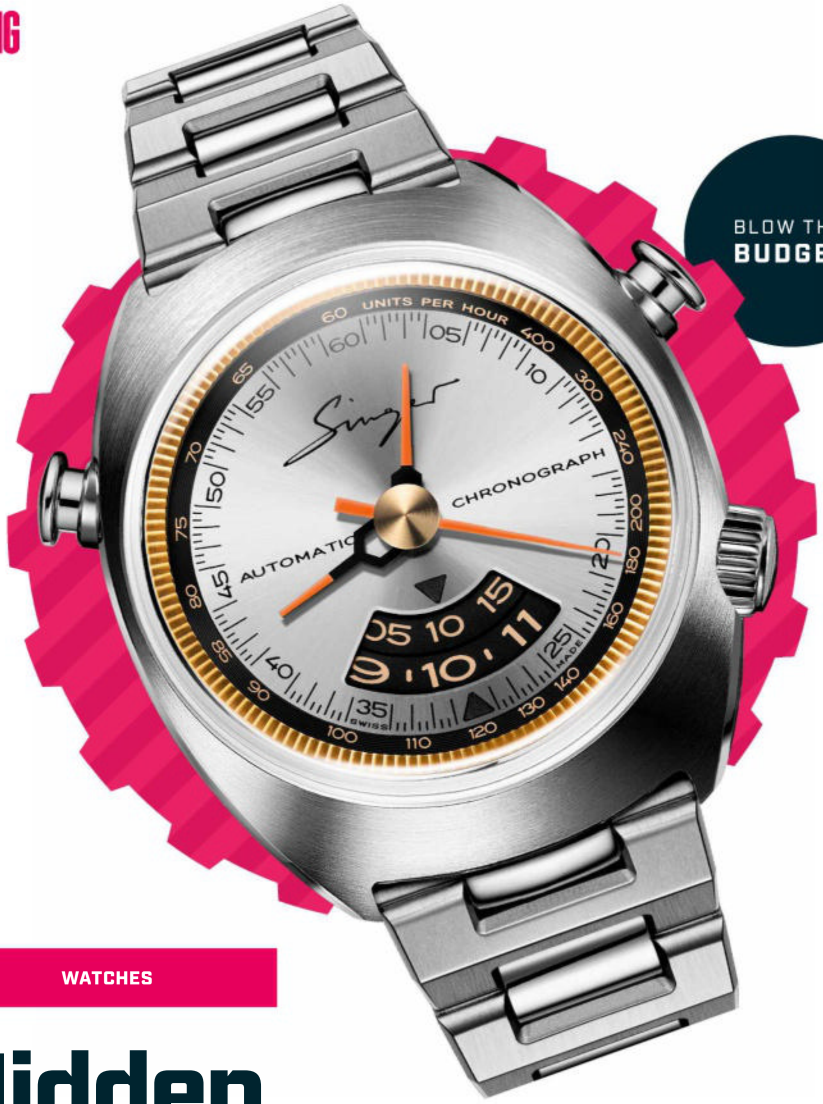
Carnut5562 TG



IT FLEW UNDER THE RADAR, SO YOU MAY NOT HAVE NOTICED, BUT Jag showed a concept car recently… Yeah, OK, so the reveal of the proudly pink Type 00 – the first concept named after a type of flour since 1989's Mazda Strong Wholemeal – failed to dampen the wildfire of debate that's raged since Jag showed off that ad. If anything, it poured a couple of gallons of (pink) paint thinner on the flames.

This may have been exactly as Jag intended. If it wanted exposure, it sure got it. Mad, spittle flecked rage? It got plenty of that, too. Put diplomatically, many people seem to have found the Type 00… somewhat confusing.

So why this mass public outpouring of befuddlement? Well, according to some of the online commentary, it's because the Type 00 is a vile desecration of everything Britain holds dearest, an affront to our very civilisation. (Dudes! Calm down! You're shouting at a big pink EV!) Fortunately, others are a little more balanced in their views. **SAM PHILIP**



BLOW THE **BUDGET**

WATCHES

Hidden messages

It seems the watch you do – or don't – wear gives out all sorts of signals to those in the know

WORDS: RICHARD HOLT

WHAT DOES YOUR WATCH – OR LACK of watch – say about you? Even if you never think about watches, and have paused on this page for a bit of lighthearted scoffing, you are giving out watch vibes. Sometimes these are obvious, others less so.

Maybe you buy a hefty gold number because you like how it looks and feels. Or a fancy name brand because you like the style and the history. But the message these give out is this: fear not, poor folk, my harvest has been plentiful.

Or perhaps you choose a steel diving watch that looks tough enough to dig holes in the bottom of the ocean. Whether you are a diver or not, your choice of watch tells people you are a person of action, whatever the truth may be.

Going watchless gives out a message all of its own. On a stag do, nobody cares. But if you dine at an old school gentlemen's club without a watch, it will confirm their suspicions that you do not belong.

For some people, a watch is part of the uniform, and if you don't conform, it is a sign something is wrong. This makes no sense, of course – the wristwatch has only been a thing for just over a century, and fashions change. There's no reason to keep wearing watches forever. Unless we want to.

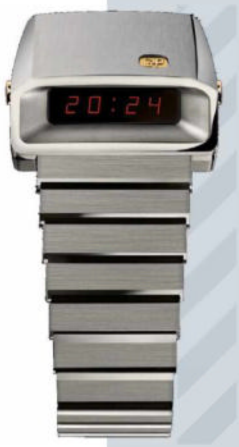
In celebration of this free-spiritedness, here are four watches where things are not quite what they seem. They give out good vibes, but what they say about you is anyone's guess.

PRO TIP

The internet's effect on the secondhand watch market has been twofold. 1) The days of finding big bargains are all but gone, as everyone can check prices online. 2) With a million watches to choose from, there are loads of options. There are decent, handsome automatic watches for under £100, as well as big names for a lot less than they cost new. For some, going vintage may be the answer.

Singer Reimagined Chronograph

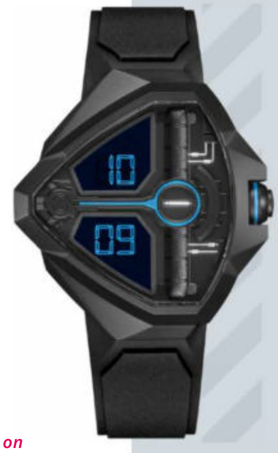
Singer is famous for 911 conversions, but is legally bound to say it is not sponsored, associated, approved or endorsed by Porsche. The same goes for sister company Singer Reimagined, whose watches have a lovely aircooled Teutonic feel, but not enough to worry the lawyers. £56,500; singerreimagined.com



APPROX **£4k**

Girard-Perregaux Casquette 2.0

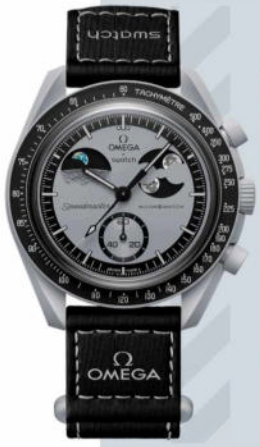
In the 1970s, a digital watch was fancy new tech. Then it became the cheap alternative. Now it's fancy again with this retro space age number. It has a tubular LED display and a case and bracelet made from ceramic and titanium. £4,000; girard-perregaux.com



UNDER **£3k**

Hamilton Ventura Edge

A watch made famous on the wrist of Elvis in a film in the 1960s, the Ventura was reimagined as different futuristic timepieces in sci-fi films like *Men in Black* and *Dune*. Quite a lineage to follow, and the triangular steel case will be noticed wherever it goes. £2,235; hamiltonwatch.com



UNDER **£300**

Bioceramic MoonSwatch

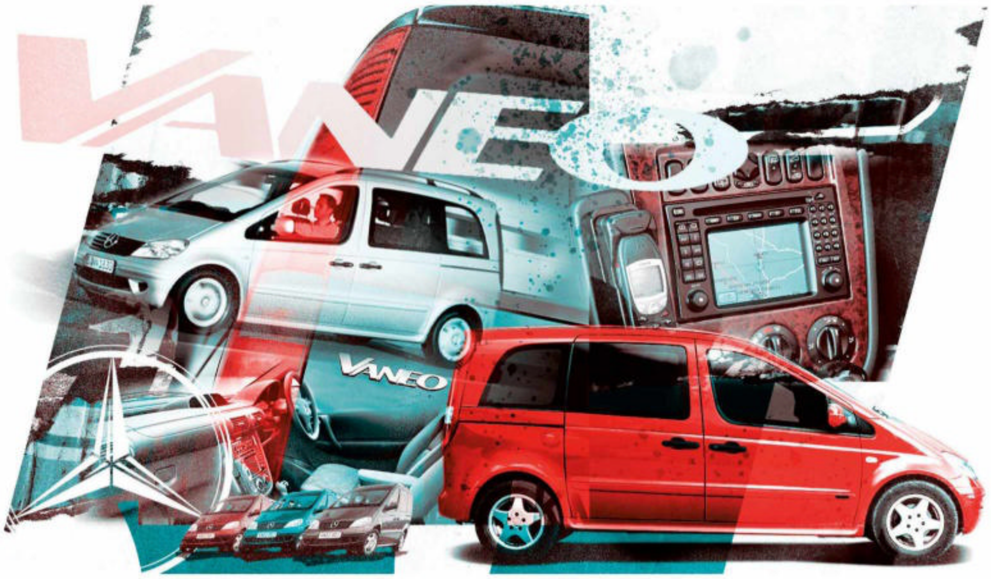
An Omega Speedmaster Moonwatch is a fancy mechanical watch that will cost you thousands. This Swatch gives you the Moonwatch feel for just £288, if you can get hold of one – they've been very popular and are only available in store, max one per customer. £288; Swatch stores only

The finest failures in automotive history

EPIC FAIL

MERCEDES VANEO

WORDS: SAM PHILIP



Some cars achieve Epic Fail status thanks to their shoddy build quality, or their lacklustre performance, or the botched business plan that underpinned their creation. The Vaneo, however, flopped for none of these reasons. It achieved its fail status on account of *oh God will you just look at it*.

TopGear takes no pride in being so very shallow in its judgement. Beauty, after all, is only skin deep. You should never judge a book by its cover. On the other hand, *oh God will you just look at it*.

Introduced in 2002 and based on the bones of the quietly revolutionary (but famously tippy) first gen A-Class, the Vaneo apparently sought to answer the eternal car buying question of, 'What if large family, but also top hat enthusiasts?'

Borrowing its footprint-to-height ratio from a fridge freezer, the Vaneo offered seating for up to seven adults, so long as all those adults a) had very long necks and torsos, b) had very tiny legs, and c) had no sense of shame. So voluminous was the headroom that Merc could have installed a second deck of seats atop the ground floor accommodation.

Road tests of the day praised the Vaneo's comfortable ride and flexible interior. What they failed to mention was its bile inducing, house of mirrors appearance, which gave the uncanny impression that the Merc design teams responsible for Vaneo's lower and upper sections had, at best, never met, and at worst were actively working to undermine each other.

Somehow, 2,500 of these slaphead station wagons (OK it's not *technically* a station wagon, but why let technicalities stand in the way of a snappy phrase?) found homes in Britain between 2002 and 2005, thus providing definitive proof that people can't be trusted to make any good decisions about anything, ever.

According to the DVLA's latest stats, some 350 Vaneos remain loose on British roads today. Be careful out there, people. Exercise extreme ocular vigilance. They trundle among us.

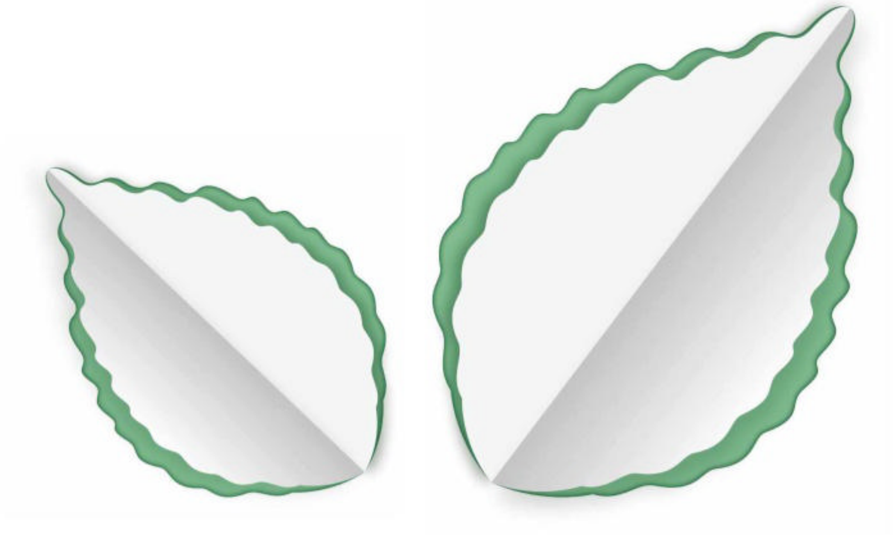
> **"What road tests failed to mention was its bile inducing, house of mirrors appearance"**

THRILLS WITHOUT THE BILLS

Fast(ish) cars you can actually afford

BMW M5 (E39)

What is it?	Why are we interested?	How many were made?	Costs?
The new BMW M5 costs a smidge over £111k, which is… a lot. But peak M5 is the E39. Subtle, manual, 400bhp V8. So why not have that?	*Because a 727bhp plug-in hybrid M5 that weighs 2.5 tonnes misses the point. Why not get something that does the job for much less?*	*Some 20,482 E39 M5s were made. They are known as a connoisseur's car, rather than just the most expensive version of a 5-Series.*	*Under £10k for a worn high miler, more like £45k–50k for a minter. But £25k would buy you a really decent one. Leaving £85k for maintenance.*



PAPER LOVES TREES

European forests, which provide wood for making paper, paper packaging and many other products, have been growing by 1,500 football pitches every day!

Source: Two Sides Analysis of FAO data, 2005-2020
European Forests: EU27 + Norway, Switzerland and the UK

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100% GENUINE QUESTIONS

HELP!

The internet's most searched questions, rudely answered by us

WORDS: SAM PHILIP

THIS MONTH: **ELECTRIC CARS**

1. How long does an EV take to charge?

Depends on the charger. If, for example, you're charging a Tesla Model Y from a regular three-pin UK wall plug, it'll take something like 36 hours to go from empty to brimmed. Using a 7kW wall box reduces this time to around 12 hours. If you can find a 150kW public charge point, you can fully recharge in well under an hour, but you do also need to factor in the 20 minutes you'll spend hunting down the eejit who left their petrol powered Suzuki Celerio blocking the charging bay, and the additional 20 minutes you'll then spend informing said eejit of their many poor life choices.

2. Can I tow my caravan with an electric car?

So long as you're only using it to tow your caravan to the nearest sea cliff before unhitching and letting gravity do its thing, sure, knock yourself out. (Only joking. *TopGear* does not condone pushing your caravan into the sea to destroy it. An industrial waste compactor does the job far more efficiently.)

3. Why don't EVs self-charge?

Hang on. You're asking why an electric car can't use its electric motor as a generator to top up its battery? The electric motor that's powered by the very same battery? If so, may we please introduce you to our good friend, Professor Second-Law-Of-Thermodynamics?

4. Why aren't electric cars covered in solar panels?

Because they'd be very hard to see out of.

5. How far can an EV go on a charge?

Which car? And, more crucially, which driver? If you've got a big batteried, low drag new EV like, say, the Mercedes EQS, and it's being piloted by whoever it is that conducts the WLTP test – a driver, we can only assume, with a pathological terror of travelling faster than 35mph, and also of accelerator pedals – then covering 400 miles or more between charges is possible. If you're driving, say, a Mazda MX-30, and you're planning on using the throttle at least once on your journey, your real world range is 'hopefully enough to get you to the nearest charge point'.

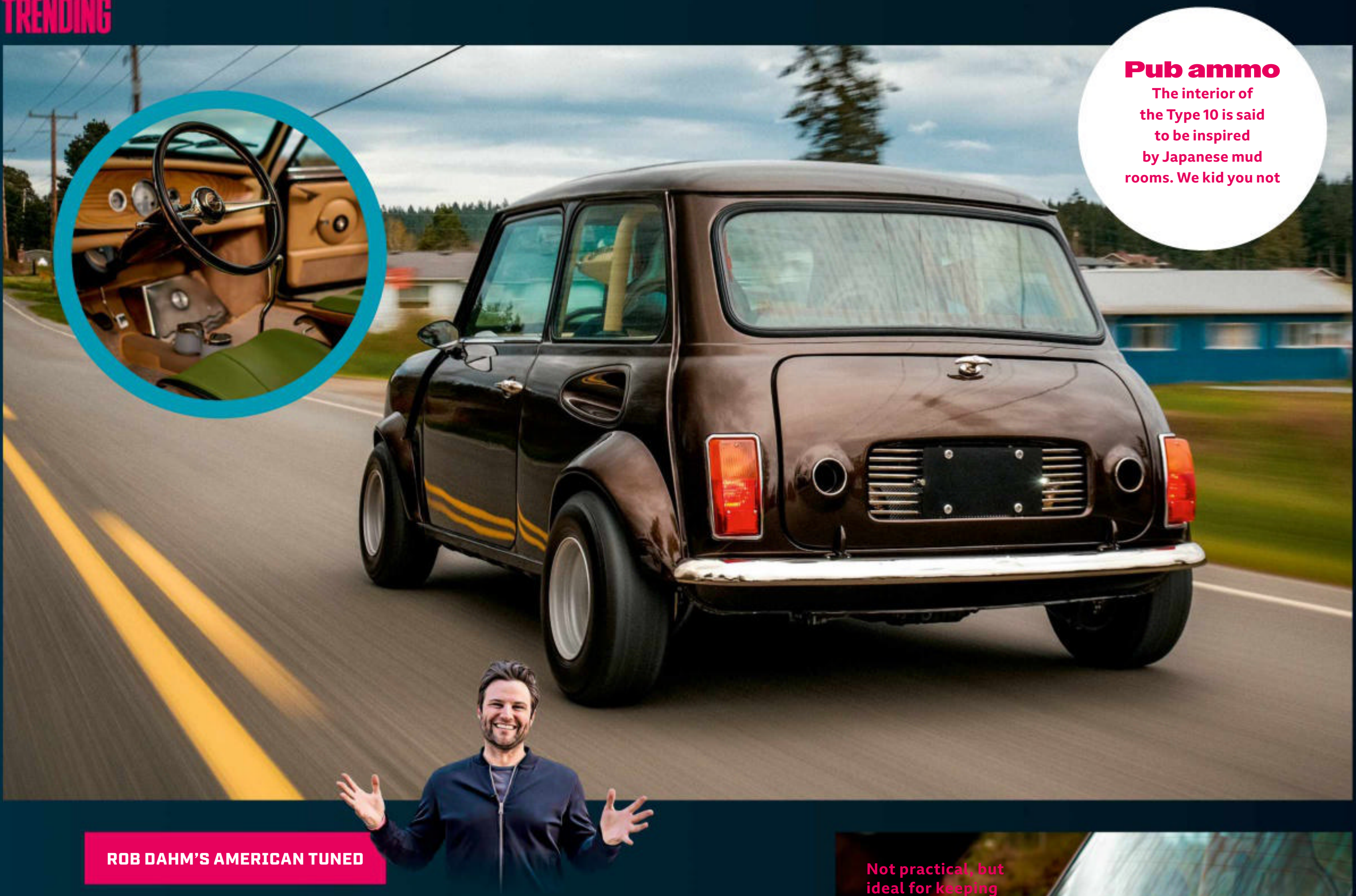
6. Can I charge my electric car in the rain?

You can and indeed should. Contrary to popular fears, introducing a few drops of water into the charging interface will in fact provide your EV with a peppy boost of power, much like injecting nitrous into the intake manifold of a petrol engine. On a totally unrelated note, you *do* own a big sturdy pair of wellies, right?

7. Why is my electric car humming?

Because it doesn't know the words.

IMAGE: MANUFACTURER

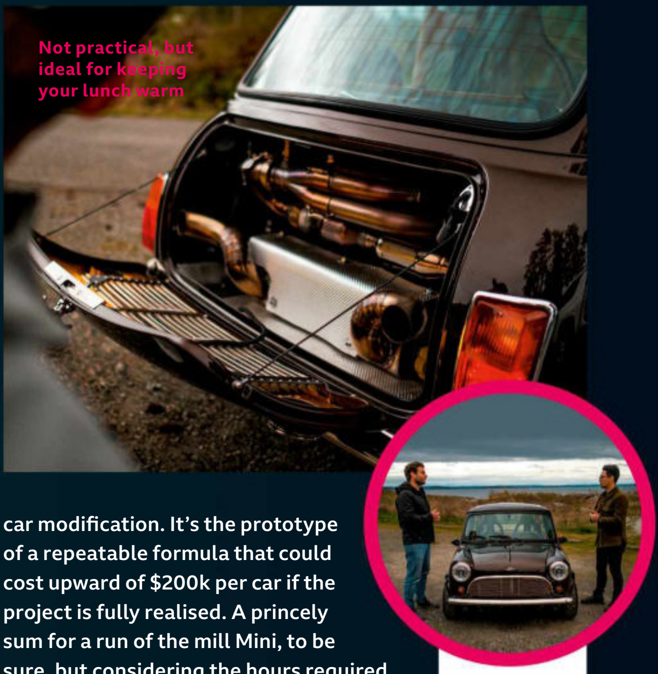


Pub ammo
The interior of the Type 10 is said to be inspired by Japanese mud rooms. We kid you not

ROB DAHM'S AMERICAN TUNED

The $200k Mini Cooper with fire in its belly

When it comes to this restomodded 1960s Mini Cooper, everything is still mini but the price…



Not practical, but ideal for keeping your lunch warm

THE INCONGRUOUS CONCEPT OF A luxurious, coachbuilt Mini Cooper hit the swinging London scene in the early 1960s, a few years after the original Mini did. On this episode of *TopGear: American Tuned*, we turn up on the US side of the Puget Sound to check out a Canadian Mini restomod that recalls those heady times. Call this one North American Tuned.

From comic legend Peter Sellers' Hooper-built 1963 Morris Mini – featured in the *Pink Panther* sequel *A Shot in the Dark* – to the "Mini De Ville" by Harold Radford & Co, one of which Sellers gifted to his then wife Britt Ekland, coachbuilt Mini Coopers were a product of an intense pop cultural moment.

Fast forward 60 years or so, and this project by Spectre Vehicle Design takes the ethos of those originals and puts a 2020s backspin on it. Add a sports car performance target and some ingenious interior touches, and you get the Type 10, a richly appointed, Vancouver-born Mini with power from a modern drivetrain.

A flipped around 2.0-litre Honda K20 4cyl, plus a limited slip differential and six speed manual gearbox provide a relatively extraordinary 230bhp. With total mass in the 800kg range, the power to weight ratio of this Mini is closer to Porsche Cayman territory.

The Type 10 project, born from a fertile collaboration of technical and design expertise, transcends the typical car modification. It's the prototype of a repeatable formula that could cost upward of $200k per car if the project is fully realised. A princely sum for a run of the mill Mini, to be sure, but considering the hours required to achieve the Type 10's level of detail and performance, six figures doesn't seem so far fetched. If it was good enough for Inspector Clouseau…

Indeed, the Type 10 maintains the Mini's bulldog stance and compact charm, but injects it with contemporary flair and vigour, a tribute to the Mini's performance potential. It exemplifies the mysteries of automotive alchemy – a perfect blend of historic charm and the possibilities of modern tech.

Now go and watch the video

IT SOUNDS EXACTLY LIKE PETROL

MYTH BUSTER

“THE FUTURE FOR ELECTRIC TRACK DRIVING HAS TO BE FUEL CELLS”

WORDS: PAUL HORRELL

BATTERY POWERED CARS PRESENT huge difficulties at racetracks. They’re heavy and they can’t do a long stint before the battery goes flat. When it does, recharging demands time and high power electric infrastructure.

So people suggest fuel cells as an alternative to batteries, to provide electricity for the motors. Bring along a tank of hydrogen on a truck, and you’ve got light cars and quick pitstops. Bingo.

Except, not quite. Fuel cells aren’t very suitable for racecars for a simple reason. They don’t run hot enough, which makes it hard to get rid of their waste heat. A high power fuel cell runs at about 80°C. On a hot sunny day the air shimmering above black tarmac can go beyond 40°C – more in hot climates. So the radiator coolant temperature isn’t much hotter than the air it’s trying to push waste heat into.

So motorsport is interested in hydrogen combustion engines. Like fuel cells, they’re zero carbon, emitting only steam. Toyota has run GR Yaris and GR Corolla cars in 24hr races, and Alpine made a V6 ICE for its Alpenglow concept which looks like it’d be at home at the sharp end of a Le Mans grid.

This solves the problem. The hydrogen engine, because it converts fuel to energy by explosions not by electrochemical reaction, runs hotter. So it’s easier to get that waste heat away. Besides, much of it doesn’t even go into the cooling system, but straight down the exhaust pipes.

None of this means fuel cells aren’t looking like a better solution for road vehicles – trucks and vans especially – versus hydrogen combustion, because here the efficiency is what really matters and fuel cells are more efficient at part power. If there does turn out to be a demand for hydrogen road fuel, it’d make it easier to find it near a racetrack of course.

You can’t just pipe hydrogen into a petrol engine, but the adaptations to make it work are straightforward. And hydrogen tanks are lighter than batteries, so the final ICE hydrogen car ends up packaged pretty similarly. It also behaves similarly, so drivers will feel comfortable with it. You don’t have to manage regen like in an electric racer. And fans will love it. EV racers make an unattractive whine, and you can’t hear how hard the driver is leaning on the power as it comes out of a corner. An ICE hydrogen car sounds like a petrol one.

#8

THE VAPOURWARE FILES

THIS MONTH:
LAMBORGHINI ASTERION

What is it?

The future of Lamborghini, once. This mid-engined, close to production concept was revealed in October 2014 and was slated to be the first hybrid Lambo, just a couple of years behind the likes of the McLaren P1 and LaFerrari.

Did they build any?

Just one, but apparently fully functional. The 600bhp Huracán V10 drove the rear wheels, while a 300bhp motor took care of the fronts. It could do 31 miles at up to 78mph in (front drive) e-mode, while the hybrid system added 280kg to the car. But Lambo boss Stephan Winkelmann said customers poo-pooed the idea of hybrid drive. So, the third model Lambo became the Urus.

Where are they now?

Ironically, Lambo is doing rather well… having become an electrified purveyor of hybrids. The 1,000bhp V12 Revuelto PHEV leads the line, the Urus is also now a PHEV, and the Huracán-replacing Temerario swaps a soulful V10 for a tri-motor assisted V8. The Asterion wasn’t wrong. It was ahead of its time.

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TOP 9 STRANGE MOTORING AWARDS

WORDS: GREG POTTS

BEST NEW CAR PARK AWARD

Presented by *Parking Review* magazine, the British Parking Awards "recognise the leading examples of car park management, enforcement, design and teamwork". The 2024 award for Best New Car Park went to... Blackpool Central multistorey..

FORECOURT TRADER OF THE YEAR

At the 2024 Forecourt Trader Awards, MFG St Clears service station in Carmarthenshire took the top gong as the UK's Forecourt Trader of the Year. Come on now, don't try and tell yourself you haven't got a favourite fuel station...

CONCOURS D'LEMONS WORST OF SHOW

Brought to you by the folks behind the 24 Hours of Lemons endurance race, this aims to lower the tone of the stuffy Monterey Car Week. Worst of Show in 2024 went to a brown, fur covered Lincoln with a horse mannequin on the roof.

BEST EV CHARGING NETWORK

Every year, responses to Zapmap's annual EV charging survey are used to create a league table of charging networks across the UK. In 2024 the 'large' networks table was topped by Tesla for the first time.

ROUNDABOUT OF THE YEAR

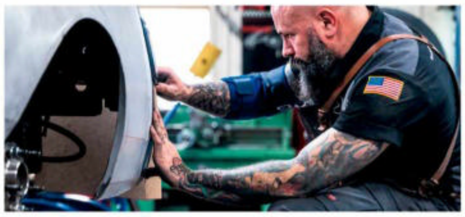
An award so prestigious the announcement of the 2024 winner made national news. Both BBC News and the *Daily Mail* reported on Swindon's bonkers Magic Roundabout being crowned by the UK Roundabout Appreciation Society.

TOWCAR OF THE YEAR

The Caravan Club's Towcar of the Year competition put 28 contenders to the test in 2024, with the Porsche Cayenne E-Hybrid coming out as the overall champion having already triumphed in the hotly contested 'Caravan weight over 1,700kg' category.

UK BUS DRIVER OF THE YEAR

The competition concludes with a National Final during which competitors must pretend they work for the fictitious Middle Walk Bus Company. They then simulate a normal day and complete a theory test, before the winner is announced at a gala dinner.



BODYSHOP OF THE YEAR

The Bodyshop Awards 2024 crowned "the best and brightest in the UK accident repair industry" with separate awards for small, medium and large bodyshops, plus a number of gongs for technicians and apprentices.

LOO OF THE YEAR

The one they all want to win. The overall winner at the Loo of the Year Awards is presented with the 'Golden Loo Seat Trophy'. There was a motoring triumph at the 2023 awards, with campsite and caravan park Hillcroft Park taking the top gong.

MIKE'S CHANNEL

Q: WHAT'S THE MOST EXCITING CAR TECH IN 2025?

At the start of a new year, it's typical to look to the future and as *TopGear*'s resident breakdancing traffic cop at the intersection between cars, video games and technology, I'm pleased to report that there's lots to be excited about as we head into the sci-fi year of AD2025. Here's just a small selection of the technologies that I have my eye on.

As a simracer, one gaming trend I'm interested in is the shift in emphasis from graphical fidelity towards higher frame rates, as we approach the limit of just how many beard hairs it's necessary to render on a *Call of Duty* character's face. Even I struggle to explain the concept of frame rate without slipping into a protective coma, but here goes: the short version is that the more frames a game can throw at you per second, the smoother the game looks on the screen and, crucially, the more responsive it feels, which is hugely important for racing sims. Sony's recently released a gaming monitor, the M10S, that can send 480 unique frames to the screen every second. This means your iRacing steed will feel as responsive as real life, though I must warn you, your number of excuses for failing to catch that oversteer will also reduce by one.

As far as automotive technology is concerned, I'm less excited about AI assistants that seem like a jumped up version of the Microsoft Word paperclip, or even the prospect of a robotaxi that can drag my snoring carcass back home after an evening at the pub, and more interested in the dry practicality of the solid state batteries that a number of manufacturers will continue trialling in 2025. These promise greater range, quicker charging and less risk of turning into a £40,000 barbecue.

In spite of everything, I still believe the ideal two car garage of the future contains a 400-mile EV for tedious daily use and something with cylinders, preferably eight or more, for weekend fun. I know some people are convinced that hydrogen fuel cells are the one true future of sustainable motoring, but those cars aren't going to be significantly more entertaining to drive than an EV and if you think the infrastructure for electric charging is poor, just Google your nearest hydrogen fuel station. Five bonus points if it's in the same county as you.

Finally, with the recent arrival of Apple Vision Pro, it feels like we're really on the cusp of some exciting advancements in augmented reality, where your view of the real world is blended with virtual reality objects and information. Imagine watching the Formula One, but also having a live, GPS-powered 3D track map laid out on the coffee table in front of you. The tech already exists, obviously, as does the F1 app, but the primary obstacle to overcome is miniaturising the technology to the point where you no longer look like an idiot wearing the headset. If they can squeeze it into a pair of glasses that don't look like hand me downs from Mr Magoo, then we really will be living in the future.

Mike Channell is a TG writer, multimillion subscriber YouTuber and occasional racing driver. Not evidence of a strong work ethic, just an attention span obliterated by too many video games

ILLUSTRATION: WALTER NEWTON

GAME OF THE MONTH

HOT WHEELS MONSTER TRUCKS STUNT MAYHEM

£30, Xbox/PlayStation/Switch

Up until a few years ago we'd have approached the release of a new Hot Wheels licensed game with a similar level of excitement to the discovery of a new strain of mould. That was until *Hot Wheels Unleashed* arrived in 2021 and was far more entertaining than it had any right to be. So when *Hot Wheels Monster Trucks* landed on our figurative desk this month we approached it with an open mind. More fool us, because by comparison *Stunt Mayhem* is an insultingly slim offering. Repetitive stunt arena layouts, a limited number of challenges and a simplistic trick system give this mayfly-like longevity. With the recent *Monster Jam Showdown* offering both better presentation and more depth, *Stunt Mayhem* is only for kids whose critical faculties haven't yet developed beyond which Teletubby is the best. It's handbag toting purple icon Tinky Winky, obviously, but that's beside the point… **MC**

GEAR

GLOWSMITH CONCRETE TYRE CANDLE

glowsmith.co.uk; £50

Want to run yourself a hot bath and light a few candles but worried about feeling emasculated? Get yourself this concrete candle inspired by an all terrain tyre from a Land Rover. Available in Fresh Pine, Sweet Pomegranate, Creamy Vanilla and Red Diesel scents. One of those isn't real.

MAMMOTION YUKA 2000 R ROBOT LAWNMOWER

uk.mammotion.com; £1,949

Mammotion reckons its robot mower offers 100 per cent handsfree lawn maintenance thanks to its self emptying tech that can pile clippings in your chosen location. You don't even need a perimeter wire. Set it up once by driving it like an r/c car and then it'll learn your lawn.

FERRARI NAPPA LEATHER DRIVING SHOES

store.ferrari.com; £620

Rock up to your next track day in these and people will know you mean business. Then they'll make fun of you behind your back, but at least you will be able to smoke them out on the circuit thanks to your ultra soft leather uppers and grippy Ferrari branded soles.

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JETHRO BOVINGDON

You can't please all the people even some of the time, says JB

If YouTube teaches us anything it's that you can't please all of the people even some of the time. Shoot a fully lit video with gratuitous action? "Nobody drives like that." Drive more sedately and discuss the nuance of the driving experience? "What a boring video." Feature a hypercar? "Shame no owners will ever drive their cars." OK, what about something affordable and ordinary? Well, of the 18 viewers a third will suggest buying a used Golf GTI instead (to be fair, not a bad shout), a few will post sleep emojis and the rest will be bots talking about how to make millions in crypto.

However, the real sin on YouTube is to have an opinion that deviates even slightly from the accepted reality. In fact, critical analysis is a path to outrage, character assassination, questions concerning one's parentage and, of course, the great conspiracy theory. Because after hundreds of miles, many hours of seat time on all sorts of roads and perhaps even the context of a rival in tow, it's inconceivable that your findings could be based on facts or lived experience. It all comes down to The Agenda.

My Agenda changes a lot, it seems. If I dare suggest that a Lotus Emira isn't quite the real deal then I'm clearly on the payroll of Porsche. If I happen to love an Aston Martin it's solely because I'm British. Unless those same people who hated my Lotus conclusion happen to like the Aston Martin. Because then, as if by magic, I'm pretty much bang on the money and definitely unbiased. I can barely keep up with my ever shifting Agenda. You might even conclude it would be easier just to say what I actually think.

To be fair there are plenty of commenters who just like to show their appreciation for the time and effort poured into these projects. But the human instinct to attack different points of view is quite scary to behold, even in this ultimately unimportant little world of ours. I am obsessed with cars, but I'm not sure they could ever elicit such bile and fury in me.

However, I'd just like to use this forum to say that I personally, and *TopGear* as a whole, don't have a dark, sinister Agenda. There is no master plan to subvert the car industry and brainwash our audience. Our job is to drive cars and convey their dynamics and character in a (hopefully) entertaining way. We won't pull our punches. For British cars. Or Porsches. Or Dacias. Or Ferraris. Or anything. But at the same time we don't take delight in tearing manufacturers a new one.

In fact, we really want to be balanced, impartial and considered. Glib or poorly considered conclusions are an affront to the incredible ingenuity, engineering and the passion spent in creating any new car project. Telling the truth isn't as exciting or, if you happen to disagree, convenient as an elaborately imagined Agenda. But it does make life a lot simpler. And if you want to hear that everything is awesome, always, there are many channels on YouTube that will serve you well. Those guys and girls "Can't wait to share this journey" with you. Oh God, I'm turning into one of those poisonous commenters...

> **"The real sin on YouTube is to have an opinion that deviates from the accepted reality"**

Host of TopGear America, Jethro has driven most things, mostly sideways, and forged a reputation as one of the world's most fearless road testers. Only one thing terrifies him – electric cars

PHOTOGRAPHY: TOM BARNES

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PINKS

NATALIE PINKHAM

Who's the F1 GOAT? It's an endless debate says Natalie

Who is best: Senna, Hamilton, Schumacher or recently crowned four time world champion Max Verstappen? And why do we fixate on such comparisons? Is it even possible to make them? It's like comparing The Beatles to Taylor Swift – you can make a compelling case for both, but what's the point? Well, it's been watercooler talk for years – an eternal pastime for F1 fans around the world to debate. It's a mix of passion, nostalgia and opinion that drives it, but unlike the simple subjectivity of music taste, in F1 we have cold hard data at our disposal, albeit measured in different machinery. Back in the day, drivers wrestled death traps around circuits lined with hay bales. Today, they have halo devices, endless sim training and mountains of digital feedback to pore over.

I got thinking about this after the *TopGear* Awards when I had the privilege of interviewing Gordon Murray on stage. I am delighted to say he was full of all the charisma and character for which he is known and loved, and when I asked him what he made of modern F1, he said (with a wry smile) that he was just happy he worked in the sport in the era he did. He hailed the talent required to race in Monaco back in the day, given it required "3,000 gearchanges in an hour and three quarters". These days, he said, with his tongue very firmly in cheek, you just have to "point the car at the corner, really". He went on to give the modern crop of drivers credit, pointing out that in his day front to back of grid was spread over six or seven seconds, whereas now they are separated by mere tenths.

> **"Back in the day, drivers wrestled death traps around circuits lined with hay bales"**

The stopwatch never lies – and it offers us a treasure trove of stats. Wins, poles, fastest laps, average speed through Eau Rouge in a wet practice session – there is a number for everything, and every driver. Hamilton has the most wins. Schumacher had that aura of invincibility. Fangio built a legacy based on an incredible win rate of 46 per cent. Stats lend weight to your case for who's best, but the secret ingredient is context. Fangio drove at a time when the grids were smaller and retirements commonplace. By contrast Hamilton's record breaking 105 wins (so far) came in an era of rock solid reliability.

Rose tinted glasses play a huge part in all this. Like our friend Gordon, who doesn't love to wax lyrical about the good old days? For older fans, comparing F1 legends is a way to relive the sport's most iconic moments – and remind the young whippersnappers that they never had it so good.

There is of course no definitive answer – these debates never end with a handshake or mutual understanding – instead countless memes, insults and endless banter. Me? I'll go with Hamilton given that I've been lucky enough to witness many of his victories first hand, but with one caveat... my opinion may change if Max gets more drives like Brazil 2024 under his belt. Disagree? Thought you might. See you at the watercooler.

Natalie Pinkham is first and foremost a motorsport nut, but also a presenter for Sky Sports F1. Nobody knows more about the sport, or has better behind-the-scenes access to the paddock and drivers

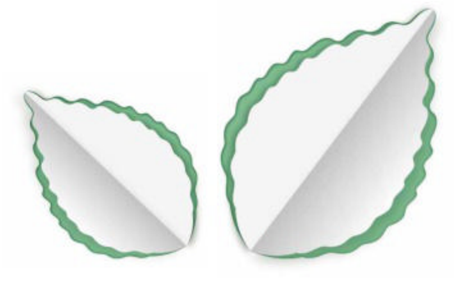
PHOTOGRAPHY: TOM BARNES

A FEW REASONS TO LOVE PAPER

Paper has been an essential communications medium for 2,000 years. Even in today's digital world, paper continues to be the preferred format for readers of books, magazines and newspapers.

Yet the myths around paper still exist. A 2023 survey by Two Sides[1] revealed 60% of European consumers believe European forests are shrinking, when in fact they have been growing by an area equivalent to 1,500 football pitches every day.[2] There is also a widespread misconception that digital communication has no environmental impact.

PAPER LOVES TREES



Paper is a uniquely renewable and sustainable product. The main raw material, trees, are grown and harvested in a carefully controlled and sustainable way - so successfully that European forests, which provide 90% of the wood fibre used by the European pulp and paper industry[3], have grown by an area the size of Switzerland in just 15 years![2]

THE PAPER REVOLUTION

The recycling rate for paper was 79% in 2023, with a total of 54 million tonnes of paper collected and recycled in Europe.[4] In 2021, the signatories of the European Declaration on Paper Recycling declared their commitment to reach a 76% paper recycling rate by 2030.[5]

In 2022, paper was recycled on average 3.5 times in Europe.[5] Without new fibres from trees, the paper cycle cannot be maintained. During the recycling process fibre is lost and so the paper industry needs fresh fibre from sustainably managed forests to keep the renewable cycle going.

PAPER POWER

The European pulp and paper industry is the biggest single user and producer of renewable energy in Europe. 62% of European pulp and paper mills' energy consumption comes from renewable sources.[4]

European forests act as a major carbon sink. Between 2010 and 2020, the average annual sequestration of carbon in forest biomass reached 155 million tonnes in the European region.[6]

To find out more interesting facts, **scan here!**

DIGITAL HAS IMPACTS

The ICT industry accounted for 4-6% of global electricity use in 2020, which is more than 2% of global greenhouse gas emissions. With increasing demand, the ICT industry is expected to increase its global electricity use over the next decade.[7]

The electronic waste problem is also colossal and growing. In 2019, the industry was responsible for a gigantic 53.6 million metric tonnes (Mt) of e-waste across the world.[8] That's equivalent to the weight of 350 cruise ships.[9]

Raw materials from digital equipment, servers and power generators are often finite, precious and non-renewable, as well as being notoriously difficult to recycle.

PAPER IS PREFERRED

In today's digital world, the power of print on paper is becoming more apparent than ever. Consumers throughout Europe love reading in print, with many understanding the importance of "switching off".

32% of respondents to a 2023 Two Sides[1] survey feel they are suffering from a "digital overload" and 49% agreed that they spent 'too long' on digital devices.

Furthermore, when it comes to bills and statements, 76% of respondents believe they should have the right to choose how they receive communications (printed or electronically) from financial organisations and service providers.[1]

Discover the story of paper **www.lovepaper.org**

SOURCES

1. Two Sides Trend Tracker, European Findings, 2023
2. Two Sides analysis of FAO data 2005-2020
3. Cepi, Forest Resources, accessed September 2023
4. Cepi, Key Statistics, 2023
5. European Paper Recycling Council, Monitoring Report, 2022
6. Forest Europe, State of Europe's Forest, 2020
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8. Global Transboundary E-waste Flows Monitor, 2022
9. Cruise Nonstop, January 2024
   (Cruise ships vary in weight from 10,000 - 260,000 gross tonnes. Basing the comparison on cruise ships weighing 150,000 tonnes, 53,600,000/150,000 = 357.33)

LOVE PAPER ®

THE 10 COOLEST CARS OF 2025

From supercars to hyper hatches, BMWs that don't look terrible to bargain family SUVs... 2025 is going to be wild. Here's our guide to the cars you should care about

ASTON MARTIN
VALHALLA

01

ASTON MARTIN VALHALLA ↑

WORDS JACK RIX **PHOTOGRAPHY** WILSON HENNESSY

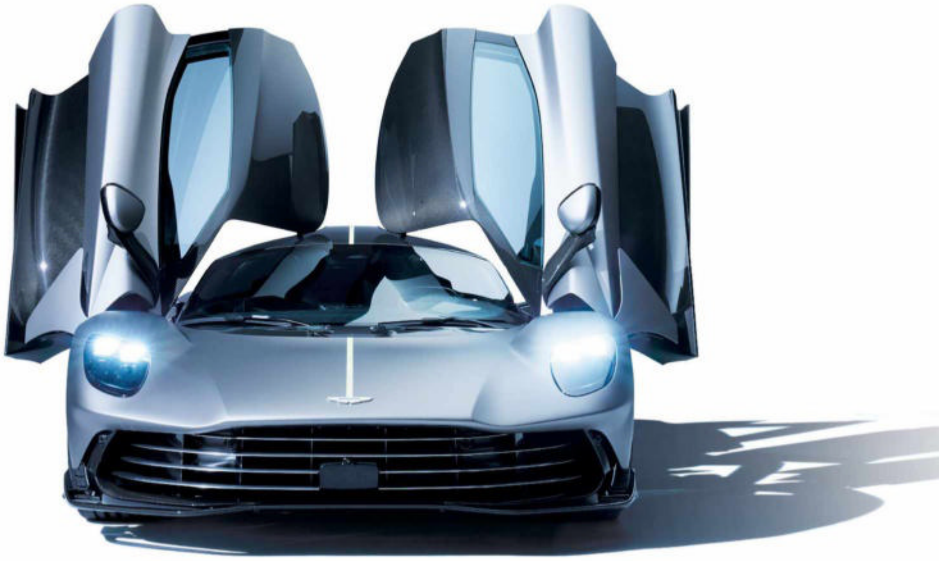
The Valhalla is a survivor. We first saw it as the filling in a mid engine sandwich at the 2019 Geneva Motor Show – Valkyrie above it, 'entry level' Vanquish below. This was also the show where former CEO Andy Palmer, on a crazed pre-IPO pump, revealed an all new fully electric Lagonda sub brand. He was given the boot a year later, along with that Lagonda monstrosity and the Maserati MC20 rivalling Vanquish… but the Valhalla rode on. In 2021 we saw a new version – now AMG V8 powered – reshaped and re-engineered under the eye of Tobias Moers. Moers made way for Amedeo Felisa in May 2022, and Felisa for Adrian Hallmark in October 2024. It's been musical chairs in the CEO's office and yet each time, and despite the Valkyrie's tortuous route to production, the Valhalla has passed scrutiny.

Which brings us to this, the production version, and while the path to get here was long and winding, the destination is glorious. A 1,064bhp V8 hybrid supercar/hypercar (if anyone knows where the line is, drop me an email, I've lost track) designed to deliver sledgehammer performance but without the Valk's zero compromise approach, limited to 999 units and costing £850,000 a pop. We'll get to the engineering wizardry in a moment, but for now let's dwell on that price. Measure it by the £450,000 V12 hybrid Lamborghini Revuelto and it's a lot of dough, but compare it with the slightly more powerful and downforce laden McLaren W1 (£2m) and Ferrari F80 (£3.1m), cars to which I'd argue the Valhalla is closer in purpose, and it's the bargain of the year.

"I'm probably biased, but I think the car is quite a lot more beautiful than the competition. I think when you chase higher and higher downforce numbers, the car becomes very functional looking and loses some of the elegance," says chief engineer for the Valhalla, Andrew Kay. "So even though those two competitors are higher value and higher power at the end of the day, which would you rather have in your garage? Which would you rather look at and have your friend in? I think we've got a bit of an edge there."

He has a point because the Valhalla is not downforce shy – it produces up to 600kg at 150mph, and then maintains that all the way to the 217mph top speed by bleeding it off via the DRS style hydraulic rear wing and active flap under the front splitter. Aston is pointing the Valhalla at the sweet spot between grip and drag, and targeting a balance of precision on track with proper usability on the road. We'll report back on that when we drive it, but for now by not chasing ultimate aero gains, beauty has been preserved. Case in point, you get four driving modes to pick from – EV (nine miles' range, up to 80mph), Sport, Sport+, Race – and yet the wing only raises itself up 255mm on its

Now go and watch the video on *topgear.com*



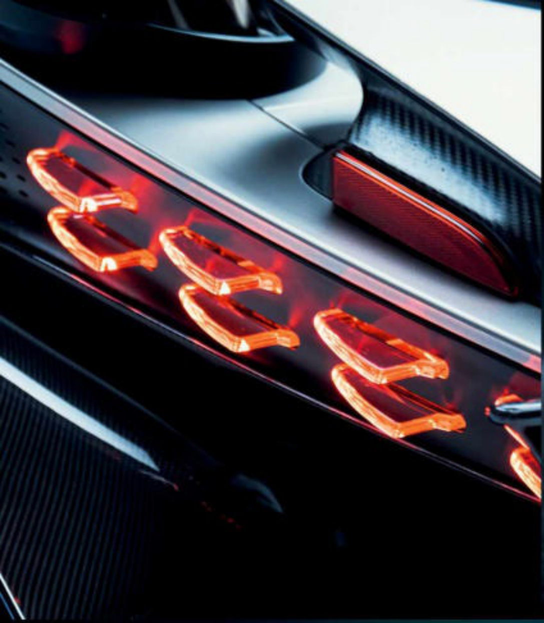
Strong tailwind? Open both doors for a sustainable 150bhp sail boost

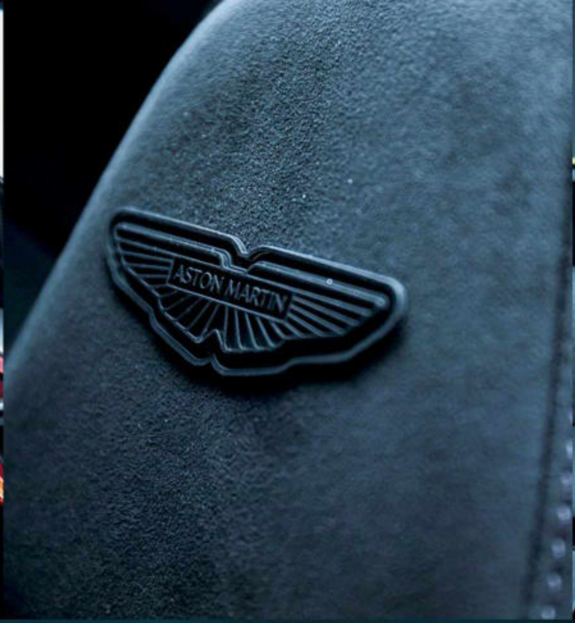
hydraulic rams in Race mode, at all other times it "remains stowed to preserve Valhalla's sleek and elegant profile". How very Aston.

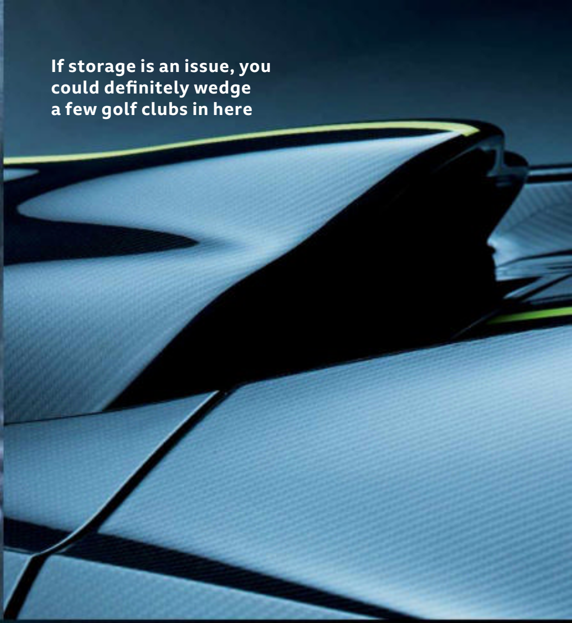
The engine is a heavily revised version of the 4.0-litre, twin turbo, dry sump, flat plane crank V8 you'll find under the bonnet of the most recent AMG GT Black Series, producing 817bhp on its own. That's supplemented by a trio of electric motors contributing another 248bhp – two on the front axle and a third in a new eight-speed dual clutch gearbox. Quick maths: that's 1,064bhp and 811lb ft in total, not miles behind the Valkyrie (1,139bhp and 682lb ft) but then at 1,655kg dry, the Valhalla weighs 385kg more. The Valhalla counters with 4WD, torque vectoring across the front axle and an e-diff at the rear, all the modern tricks to mask weight. Top tip if you want to shave more precious grammes: eschew the standard forged aluminium wheels in favour of magnesium rims to

“WHILE

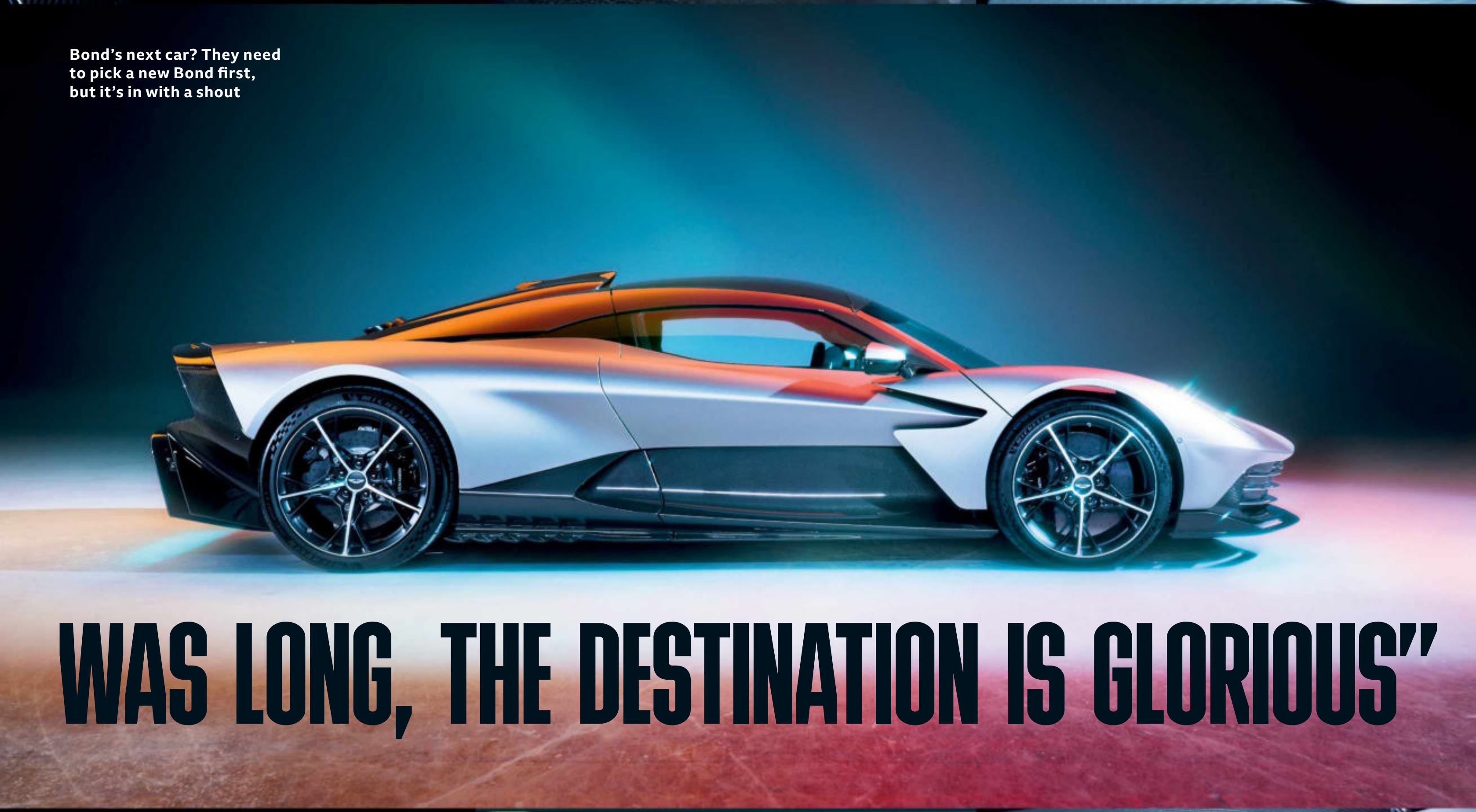
THE PATH




ASTON MARTIN

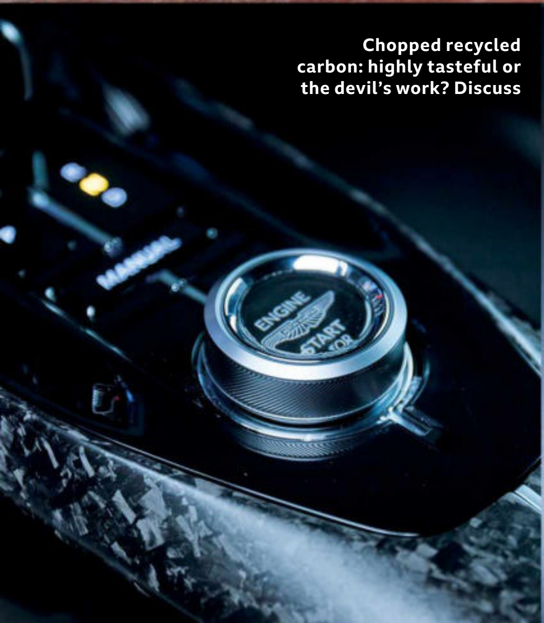


If storage is an issue, you could definitely wedge a few golf clubs in here



Bond's next car? They need to pick a new Bond first, but it's in with a shout

WAS LONG, THE DESTINATION IS GLORIOUS"


MANUAL
ENGINE
START
STOP

Chopped recycled carbon: highly tasteful or the devil's work? Discuss

ASTON MARTIN

ASTON MARTIN
VALHALLA
MICHELIN

save 12kg of unsprung mass, and then order your bodywork in naked carbon to dodge 3kg of paint. Painted or not, it'll crush 0–62mph in 2.5 seconds, which slots it neatly between the 4WD Ferrari F80 (2.15secs) and RWD McLaren W1 (2.7secs).

Trickledown tech from Aston's F1 team? Why of course! Except, we're not talking about some obscure titanium alloy used in a bolt to hold the numberplate on, they simply asked the F1 team to design the entire carbon tub. The result is a two part structure, a bit like an Easter egg split along the seam, where the lower section – which creates 95 per cent of the stiffness – uses resin transfer moulding and the upper section is made with a more traditional autoclave technique. Aluminium subframes are then hung off either end. Kay again: "We do use carbon fibre at Aston, but to use it to this extent, we called on F1 expertise. It's an immensely stiff structure, which makes it easy to tune the suspension because you get so little movement from the body structure."

Even so, they're not leaving anything to chance. Bilstein DTX adaptive dampers offer that wide operating window that's supposed to define the Valhalla, while the front suspension is pushrod with inboard dampers (visible through the carbon fibre clamshell just ahead of the windscreen, because why not), and the rear is a five link setup. Brakes are Brembo carbon ceramics aided by regen from the e-motors and a rear wing 'air brake' when you really stomp on it in Race. The tyres are Michelin Pilot Sport 5Ss as standard, or Cup 2Rs if you envisage taking your £850,000 Aston for regular workouts on track or live somewhere it never rains.

Some notable bits on the exterior – that roof scoop rams air into the engine and cooling system and will impress your friends, the twin trumpet exhausts are there to make noise and also impress your friends, while another pair of pipes are hidden on the inside edges of the Venturi tunnels around the back. The doors are forward hinged dihedral jobbies and there not just to impress your already very impressed friends. They move up and forwards, taking half the roof with them, which makes it surprisingly easy to scooch over the low sill and drop into the single piece carbon seats with dignity intact.

Backside installed, the interior is fairly standard in its layout – a couple of rectangular tablets behind the wheel and in the middle of the dash, an 'F1 inspired' steering wheel (by which they mean it's a bit squashed at the bottom, not riddled with incomprehensible dials and toggles) and there's even a cupholder and places to put things under the floating centre console. What's not standard is the seating position – less reclined than the Valkyrie, definitely, but still rotated skywards for more than a hint of raciness. The trim in this demo car appeared to have been vomited up by a carbon fibre cat. It's chopped, recycled and forged carbon Aston says. Spec it sparingly, we say. Finally, notable by their absence, are the noise cancelling headsets you have to wear in the Valkyrie if you don't want tinnitus for the rest of your days.

In summary, the Valhalla has the performance potential to turn your organs inside out, it looks and feels exotic and walks the line betwixt brutal and elegant with aplomb. It has more technology than a Chinese smartphone factory and if you put it in the same bracket as the Ferrari F80 and McLaren W1, it's a 'more than half price' hypercar. Surely it couldn't survive a fight with Ferrari and McLaren's finest… could it?

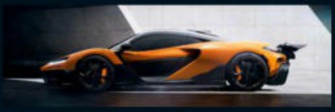
"VALHALLA HAS THE POTENTIAL TO TURN YOUR ORGANS INSIDE OUT"

OTHER HYPE MACHINES

Billionaires! Some hard choices are coming... or just one of each?

FERRARI F80
A V6? In an ultimate Ferrari? Very clever, but we want noise

BUGATTI TOURBILLON
That's more like it! Cosworth V16, no turbos, will wake the dead



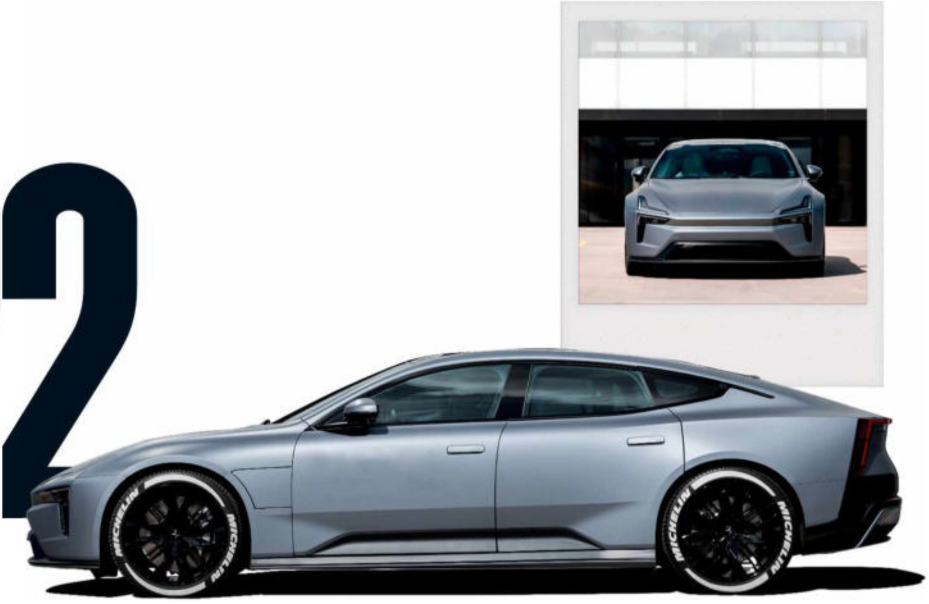
McLAREN W1
Huge rear wing = much downforce. You get the rest of the car for free

NILU 27
1,000bhp nat asp V12, manual box, killer looks. Pray it makes production

RIMAC SINGLE SEATER
Nevera R power, single seat body, faster than an F1 car. No really

ALFA ROMEO 33 STRADALE
Alfa still knows how to sketch 'em, needs to drive as good as it looks

02



Polestar 5

What the electric car needs is a bit of romance… Amid all the samey crossovers and arguments over the rationality of EVs – or the fact they've been press-ganged into the culture wars – we could do with some EVs that attempt to shortcut their way into our hearts. Polestar, like Jaguar and perhaps DS, gets that.

BMW and Merc make fast electric four-doors but they're souped up airport VIP minicabs. Polestar is different. The 5 is a low slung, sports four-door, highly original, beautifully proportioned and chisel sharp.

Under that skin is a brand new platform, engineered in Warwickshire by ex-F1, Lotus and McLaren engineers. Highlights include mixed materials for strength with lightness, and a battery with silicon rich anode chemistry that can take a 10 to 80 per cent jolt in little over 10 minutes on existing 350kW chargers. The two motors will make north of 850bhp. Taycan territory. Consider our pulses officially raised. **PH**

03

DS No 8

They want you to think of French luxury, so henceforth DS will be naming its output like Chanel's No 5 and No 19 scents. Welcome, then, to the DS No 8.

There's another number it wants you to notice: 469. That's the WLTP range in miles, at least of the one with the biggest battery, smallest wheels and fewest motors (one). This is possible because it's slippery, not just in its Cd but its reduced frontal area. Its floor and suspension might be similar to its platform mates, the Peugeot e-3008 et al, but the dash and cabin and roof are lowered to evade the air at speed.

Options include uncommon cabin colours and textures, two-tone body treatments and a backlit 'grille', all helping nudge the design out of the mainstream, though most buyers will spec silver outside and black within. Hmm… DS is a peripheral choice, so why be bound by configurator convention? **PH**

04

Honda O Series

Japan shocked the world with its revolutionary 'bullet' trains in 1964. The codename for the 137mph electric streamliners was 0 Series because Japanese railways didn't know how to classify them. There had never been anything like it.

Honda's attempting a similar reset with its new EV family, which pinches the Zero name. It's flirted with electric city cars before, with the California only EV Plus and the cutesy e, which both tanked. The next tactic is a fleet of electric cars with no supermini at all. It's all part of a mission to build 'thin, light, wise' EVs.

The first will be a production version of the Saloon concept which, weirdly enough, looks like a bullet train, all long, low and pointy. Honda insists this is 90 per cent of the finished car, though admits you won't find full length gullwing doors alongside the Jazz and ZzzzzzzR-V in the dealership.

The tech is what's crucial here. Honda's throwing its best minds at this. Shrinkwrapped motors and slimmer battery packs promise more spacious cabins than in many other 'skateboard' chassis EVs – the Saloon will be a BMW M4-ish 1,400mm tall. Active aero shutters add six miles of range. The battery's bulletproof case uses space age metallurgy to be slimmer yet stronger than the competition. Even the heater is said to be 13 per cent more efficient than a current equivalent.

Problem is, a recent tech briefing to *TG* claimed 300 miles of range was the target. Recharge times will be swift, but is that really enough? **OK**

FACE INSPIRATION ARRIVED DURING LUNCH IN A SUSHI BAR
MAYBE ADD WING?
YOU'RE FIRED!
CHECK HEADROOM IS COMPATIBLE WITH HUMAN LIFE
DON'T FORGET PESKY DOOR MIRRORS
NOSE LIKE BULLET TRAIN
ALSO: DOORHANDLES
TOO SHARP
WHEELS: IMPOSSIBLE TO CLEAN
THE JAZZ HAS DOORS. USE THESE?
NB: MUST ADD ACTUAL DOORS. FINANCE SAYS NO WINGS
KEEP THESE LIGHTS. REAR VISIBILITY?!!!

> **"THE TECH IS CRUCIAL HERE. HONDA'S THROWING ITS BEST MINDS AT THIS"**

IS THE TECH ANYTHING SPECIAL?

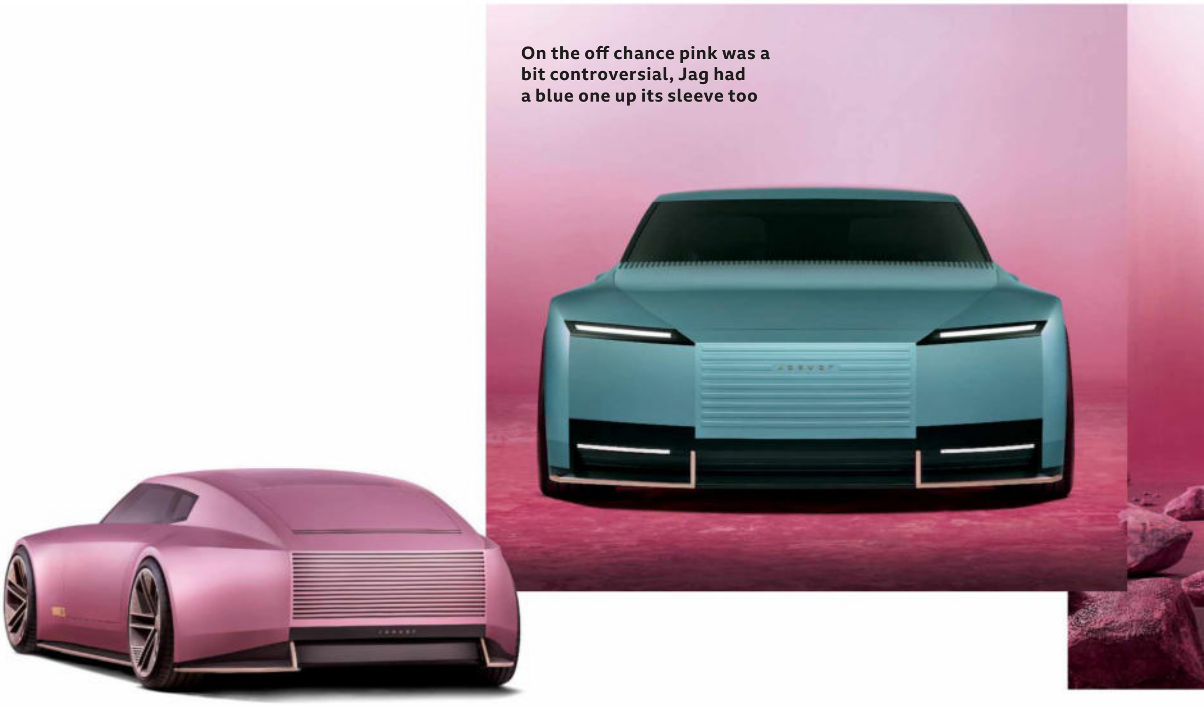
We've been asking for ages who'd step up and admit EVs are perpetually circling the toilet bowl in a doom spiral of battery size, weight, range anxiety and inefficiency. Honda insists its tech will unlock lower, lighter alternatives.

Except, if you look at the 0 Series roadmap, guess what five of the planned seven models are? Yep: SUVs. Including a giant three-row range topper that'll mix it against the likes of the Kia EV9 and Range [Anxiety] Rover.

The fact remains Honda is aiming for an EPA range of 300 miles. The same as the not thin or light Porsche Macan EV. Slimmer batteries and lighter, stiffer platforms are admirable engineering solutions, but as the BMW i3, Audi A2 or Toyota iQ will tell you... people don't buy 'clever' cars. OK

05

"IT'S A 5M LONG MONOLITHIC PINK SUPER COUPE"



On the off chance pink was a bit controversial, Jag had a blue one up its sleeve too

Jaguar Type 00

Jaguar's recent ad campaign manoeuvred the company onto the front line of the culture wars via appearances on *Have I Got News for You*, Radio Four's *Today* programme and a gazillion splenetic online comments. But it's a distracting sideshow, not least because Jaguar is a company that *makes cars*. The Type 00 concept previews a new electric flagship, due to be revealed at the end of 2025. That'll be a £120,000+ four seat GT, most likely with rear hinged doors à la Rolls-Royce or Ferrari Purosangue. A new platform, dubbed JEA, underpins the Jaguar BEV, majoring on the handling, ride and refinement the company's historically famous for. We're promised a range of up to 478 miles WLTP and just as importantly 200 miles in a 15-minute rapid charge. That's going to require a serious battery pack, production of which is due to start in 2026 at the Tata Group's £4bn gigafactory in Somerset.

Until then the Type 00 is here to entertain/enrage, not so much eye candy as an all you can eat buffet. It's a 5m long monolithic pink super coupe that sits somewhere between the Rolls Spectre and Tesla Cybertruck – bluff, bold, uncompromising. It uses a 'strike through' graphic – a series of horizontal lines – that's repeated ahead of the windscreen, on the roof, and on the rear. Note also the absence of a back window, a trick that's already in production on the Polestar 4. Rearview cameras are hidden in the brass 'ingots' in panels on the sides, embellished with the Leaper 'maker's mark'.

If you think the exterior is punchy, get a load of the inside. Opening the butterfly doors reveals a world of brass, travertine stone and textile "materiality", in Jag parlance. The stone element acts as a plinth that supports the seats and a central spine. There's a wool blend on the seats and across the sound bar. The instrument and infotainment screens slide seamlessly in and out of view. The digital detox idea is explored in more depth by the Prism case, a mysterious tray that sits in a special section on the body side and contains three 'totems' of natural materials: brass, travertine and alabaster. Place one of those inside the centre console and the occupant can tailor the mood of the interior to suit – ambient lighting, sound, aroma and screen graphics.

Jaguar nonetheless insists that the Type 00 is close to the real thing. The same design team is responsible for both. Images of a camo'd test car confirm that those eye popping proportions remain intact. As well as completely rethinking the design and brand image, Jaguar is also "reframing the customer relationship". There will be a new digital eco system and curated brand experience stores in fashionable metropolitan areas instead of old school dealers. **JB**

Don't stress! This is just the concept, the production version will be... just as mad

RAWDON GLOVER

Jaguar's managing director gets the right to reply

PEOPLE LOVE WHAT JAGUAR has been. A measure of that love is the social media pitchfork mob that assembled around its plans to change. But love never paid the bills. When Jaguar made brave cars – the final shape XJ, the I-Pace, the second generation XK8 – it struggled to sell them. When it made cautious cars – the E-Pace, the XE – it struggled even more. JLR's own HQ company car park was full of Discoverys and Range Rovers, not Jaguars. I'm concerned that this latest directional swerve, to brave and expensive cars, might meet a similar fate.

So I'm here to ask Jaguar boss Rawdon Glover for evidence that points to success for the dramatic new direction. "We have researched this intensely. We've spoken to about 1,000 prospective clients, across all the UK, North America, Europe, China. We've talked to them about our brand and we've shown them the model lineup. One of our tools is conjoint analysis, which is good at getting to what people are prepared to pay for a product.

"We show them the exterior, then the interior, talk about the specification. That gives us confidence in this product proposition – it's got to be a step change from what we do today and it's got to look like it's worth £120k. We put it in that context of competitor cars as well. Some people get it straight away and think it's fantastic, want to order one. Some people, it's not for them." But because the proposed high price means more profit per car, he's not proposing selling big numbers. That insight, he says, has further emboldened the team.

Glover stresses it won't just be about the cars. "The clients told us you've got to change the brand and the whole ownership experience. So we've looked at every element because it all adds up to this term 'willingness to pay'."

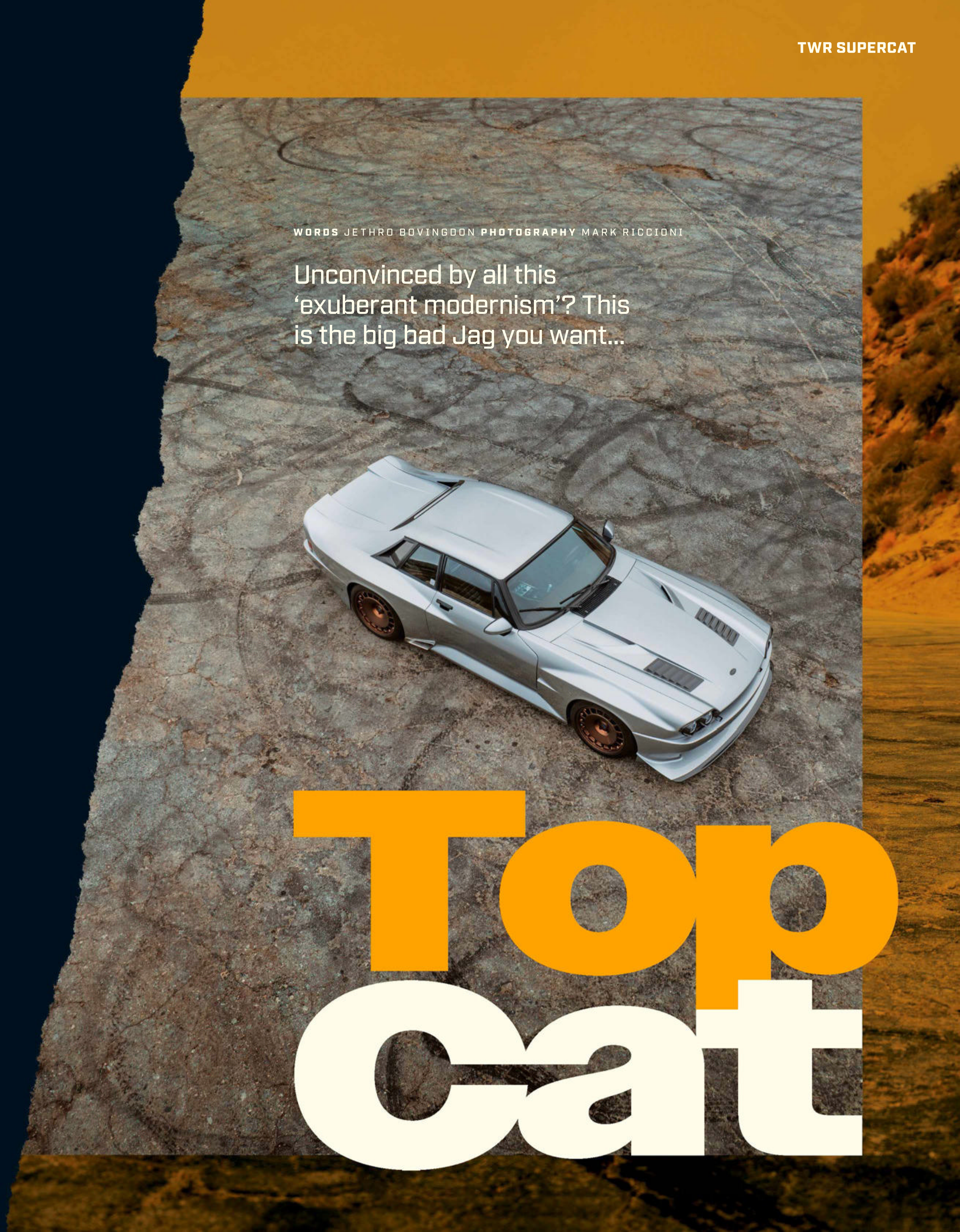
The dealers will be different, presenting the cars beautifully, not just standing them on a carpet. They'll offer you fancy food and drink, talk about collabs with artists and the like. For owners, Jaguar plans storytelling about how the cars come to be, even dialogue with the creators. "Buyers want to be treated like an insider. They'll have podcasts of Gerry [McGovern], our engineers, access to information they wouldn't otherwise get." The pain of servicing will be eased too. The car can alert Jaguar of its own needs, so Jaguar will plan the dealer appointment and get a courtesy car to where you need it.

That's the future. Glover explains why Jag's strategy so far this century couldn't work. Jaguar is too small to play in the mass scale premium market, however inspired *some* of the cars might have been. Bigger rivals could always outspend Jaguar, and so outengineer and outtech it, making their lead unassailable. "It's dominated by purchasing and manufacturing efficiencies, and economies of scale."

So in his view this rocky couple of decades wasn't caused by any deficiency in Jaguar's image. Really? The brand is OK? Why not just invent a new one? Glover leans back in his chair and pauses. It's clear he considered it. But he says shareholders at Tata hold Jaguar dearly. And on many normal metrics of brand value – spontaneous awareness, familiarity, aspiration – it scores highly. "I'd turn it around and say, well, if you were one of these Chinese brands, what would you give for that?"

One last thing. Is there actually a market for £120,000 electric cars? Jaguar will sit, in price, between the top end premium – EQE, Lucid – and the über luxe Rolls and Bentley. "We think there's white space not just in price, but for a brand that's being more disruptive. People buy cars for their design and interior. Powertrain is about 13th on the list." Ah, the electric thing. "Lots of BEVs are quite homogenous: cab forward design, small wheels that are good for range, higher riding because of a battery. Aero means they look like a bar of soap. You end up with vehicles that don't have emotional resonance. We've made the antidote. It's completely different. It's going to have incredible presence."

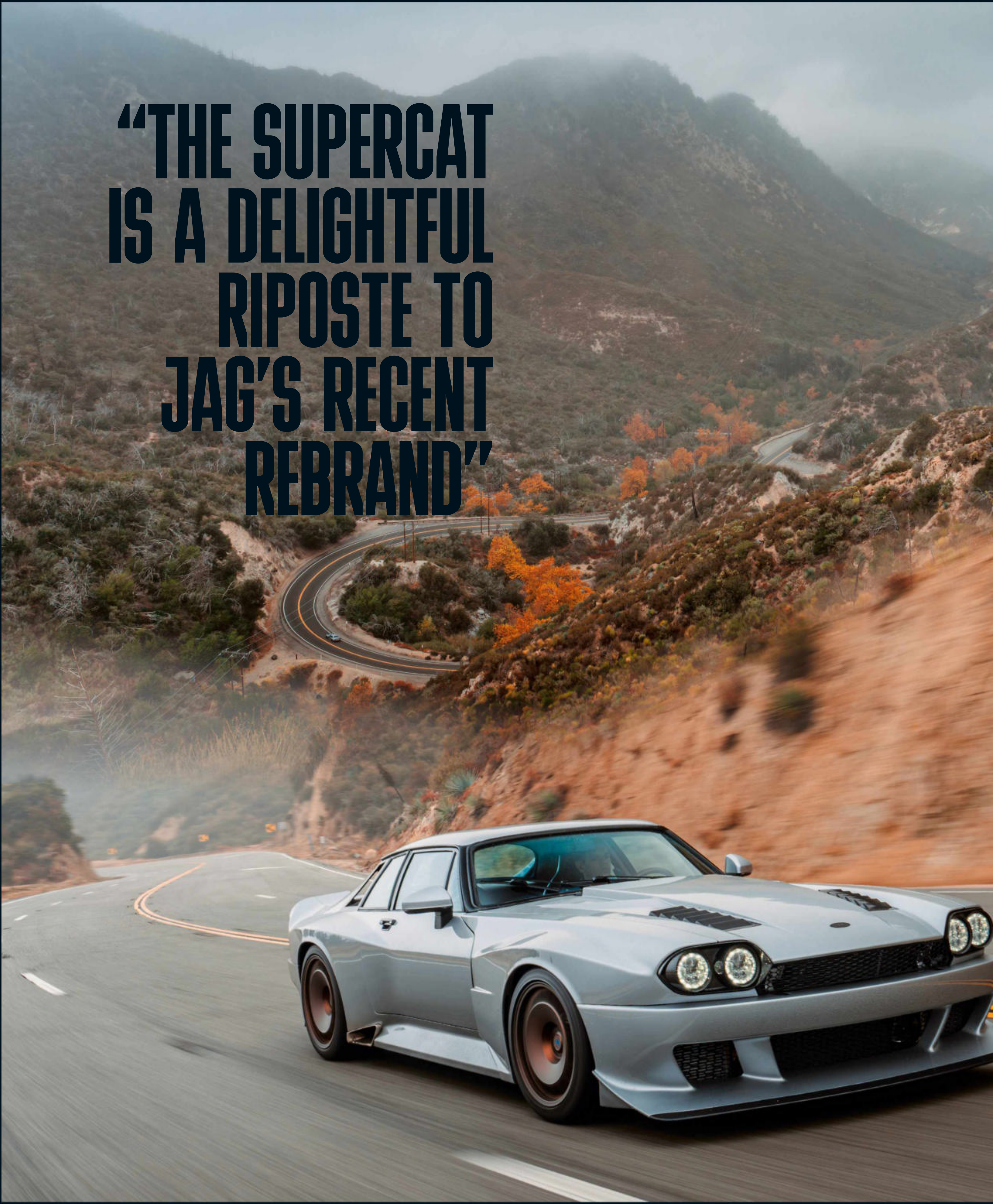
But surely there are other reasons why high end EVs are sticking? "It's an S-curve, right? It's been really steep. It's flattened off. It's going to go again. The vehicle's going to launch in 2026 and have an eight/nine year life. I'm looking at where the market's going. But people aren't going to buy this because it's electric. They're going to buy it because they think it's beautiful and the brand resonates." **PH**



WORDS JETHRO BOVINGDON **PHOTOGRAPHY** MARK RICCIONI

Unconvinced by all this ‘exuberant modernism’? This is the big bad Jag you want…

Top Cat



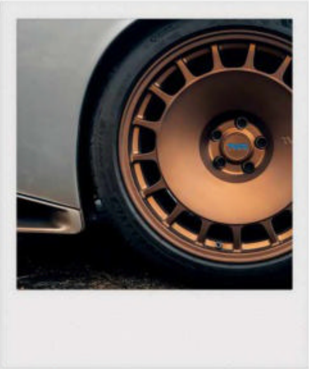
“THE SUPERCAT IS A DELIGHTFUL RIPOSTE TO JAG’S RECENT REBRAND”

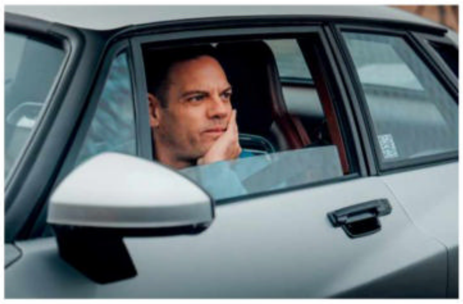
R

Rip through second and third gears in the TWR Supercat and hear its 5.6-litre supercharged V12 shriek all the way up to the limiter at 7,750rpm, and it's impossible not to care. Aside from the Pagani Utopia and GMA T.50, the combination of a mighty V12 engine and a manual gearbox is extinct. So, despite costing around £300,000, this new Jaguar XJS based restomod finds itself as the bargain entry point to a very special niche by an order of magnitude. It's also a delightfully outrageous riposte to Jaguar's recent rebrand and all-EV future. Oh, and it's a restomod that isn't a 911. Hallelujah.

Of course, 'not a 911' is a double edged sword. It immediately gifts the Supercat a freshness and generates huge intrigue, but it also means that the newly revived TWR name is working with a platform that lacks many of the 911's inherent advantages, the vast knowledge built up to successfully modify them and the endless ocean of high quality parts available from motorsport outfits and, indeed, Porsche Classic. The Jaguar XJS has motorsport pedigree and looks cooler with every passing year, but it's not exactly a solid gold sports car superhero.

The Supercat look is superhero. Or maybe supervillain. It would look perfect rolling through Gotham City on a dark, rainy night. The spec is brilliantly sinister, too. That dry sumped blown 12 cylinder engine produces 660bhp and 538lb ft (even the final 6.0-litre XJR-S cars in 1993 had just 333bhp), the six speed manual drives through a plated limited slip differential, there are six-piston calipers for the front brakes and adjustable ABS and traction control, as well as electronically adjustable dampers, a host of chassis strengthening measures and a much reduced kerbweight thanks, in part, to carbon fibre bodywork. Dripping wet – quite literally today in an uncharacteristically miserable southern California – the Supercat is 1,605kg.





Jethro ponders 2025's biggest first world problem... this or a Pagani Utopia?

On paper, then, this thing is off the scale exciting. The late Tom Walkinshaw's outfit TWR built the XJS into a formidable Group A racecar back in the early 1980s, eventually evolving it far enough to secure the 1984 ETCC championship,

Well it's one way to dry off the road surface we suppose

Now go and watch the video on *topgear.com*

giving Jaguar its first 24-hour race win (at Spa-Francorchamps) since the D-type back in the 1950s, as well as conquering Bathurst in 1985. This level of expertise being poured into a new restomod seems irresistible. Plus, well y'know, manual V12.

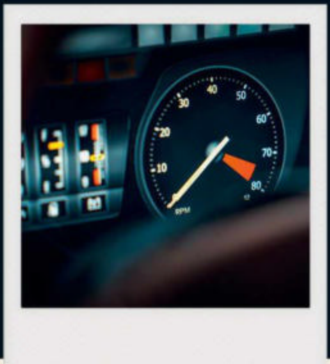
However, there are also doubts. The new TWR is built around Tom's son, Fergus, but isn't the TWR of old that ruled touring cars, developed Jaguar's Le Mans winning Group C cars and was feared and admired for its 'creative' approach to following rulesets. It's effectively a startup with a strong familial connection to the original, but no real claim on the motorsport glory. The styling – which is deliberately provocative and intended to be a bit Marmite – is credited to Kyzyl Saleem, and is his first full scale limited production project having found fame on Instagram as @the_kyza, with input from Porsche collector and social media personality Magnus Walker. So, could the Supercat be all a bit too surface? A cool name, a dramatic aesthetic but little real substance?

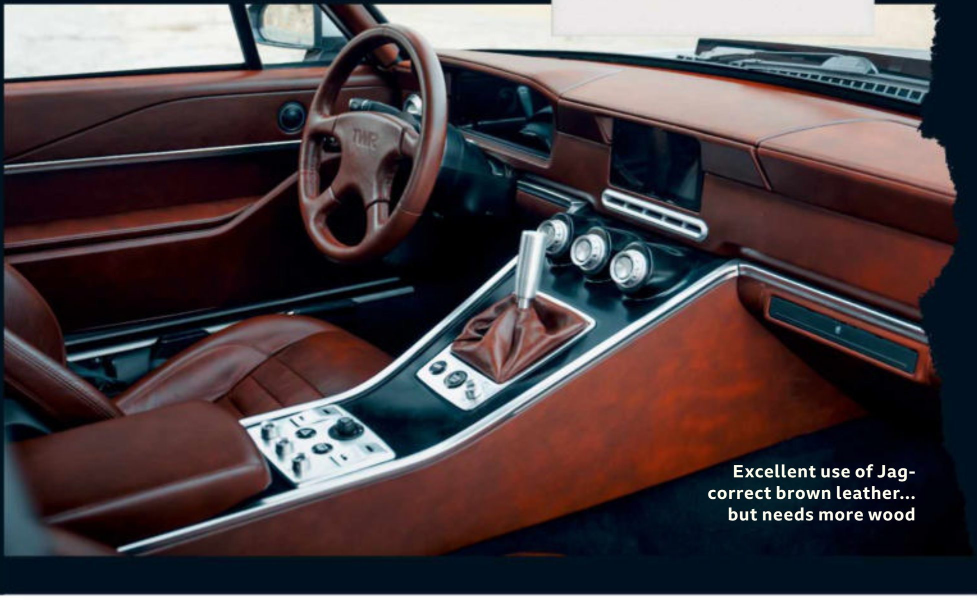
Well, through rain, fog and rock fall, this is the place to find out. This car is a rolling prototype and about 80 per cent of the way there in terms of dynamics and fit and finish, and I'm the first person from outside of TWR's inner circle to drive the Supercat in this near finished form.

"THE RACKET AND FLAMES COULD CAUSE AIR RAID WARNINGS"

TWR SUPERCAT

Price: £270,000 approx
Powertrain: 5.6-litre supercharged V12, 660bhp, 538lb ft
Transmission: 6spd manual, RWD
Performance: 0–62mph in under 4.0 seconds (est)
Weight: 1,605kg





Excellent use of Jag-correct brown leather… but needs more wood

And I'm pleased to report that there is substance here. It's still a little rough around the edges and there's work remaining to be done, but there are the bones of something very good. Which wasn't necessarily a given.

First impressions are dominated by the heft of the clutch and brakes (the former is Countachesque and the brakes are unassisted and demand racecar positivity), the unique noise that I'd probably describe as 'dirty V12', and the surprising poise of the thing. The engine doesn't have a pureblooded high pitch musicality, but the raucous cocktail of induction bark, mechanical thrash, V12 scream and – at high revs – supercharger whine is absolutely fitting for a car that looks this aggressive, while the racket and flames on the overrun could trigger air raid warnings. Sense of occasion? I think we can tick that box with an indelible marker.

The race derived electric power steering is slightly at odds with the weighty pedals, but does immediately create a sense of agility and there's a precision to the way the Supercat peels into corners that makes it feel smaller and lighter than I'd expected. In fact, my suspicion was that you'd look out over that long bonnet and feel slightly detached from the front wheels and right over the rears. In reality, you feel right at the centre of the action and confident of everything that's going on at ground level at either end. I love the six speed manual gearbox, too. Why did these things fall out of fashion?

More miles reveal fantastic traction (in stark contrast to the rough test mule that Ollie Marriage drove on track in the UK, and a good sign that the new TWR can solve engineering problems and refine the setup) and a really nice balance. In wet conditions the front pushes gently into understeer first, which can be easily balanced and reined in, before the car slips progressively into a more tail led angle of attack. It's a cool feeling and the savagery of the engine noise is calmed by these easy manners. It should be said that the engine's progressive delivery helps here, too. It sounds monstrous and delivers big performance, but it does so in an extremely predictable way.

There are improvements required – the yawning gap between third and fourth gear needs to be addressed. The adjustable traction control is too abrupt. The power steering programming is inconsistent and it would disappear altogether around long lefthanders, while low oil pressure led the engine management to cut power severely after long, fast righthanders. Funnily enough, back in the 1980s oil surge was one of the biggest problems to solve when developing the Group A cars. Even the unassisted brakes – which I really like – probably need servo assistance for most potential buyers. All things I'm confident TWR can sort.

However, the bigger challenge is building the Supercat to the standard required for the asking price. The interior needs Singer-style attention to detail, the bodywork needs to fit with millimetre precision and not rattle over rough surfaces. Everything needs to be perfect. Even then, selling 88 of these cars – commemorating Jaguar's Le Mans win in 1988 – won't be easy. I wish TWR all the luck in the world, though. The Supercat might not have true motorsport pedigree, but it's born of real passion and a love and respect for Jaguar's most glorious days.

06

Porsche Boxster EV

A Porsche rep who's been there since the Cayenne SUV sent the directors into witness protection told us recently the electric Boxster and Cayman are the biggest communications challenge Porsche has faced. Meanwhile, the Taycan has become *the* poster car for e-depreciation. And now Stuttgart's stubbornly maintaining course to replace the world's best sports cars with EVs.

Ignore chat that Porsche will keep the current flat six cars on sale alongside the EVs. It's not emissions laws killing the current 718, but cybersecurity – they're too easy to hack and too expensive to rewire. Meanwhile, the internet got a bit mixed up with Porsche's 'Flexiline' factory tech, convincing itself that the new twins could accommodate batteries or an engine in one chassis. Nope. Flexiline allows Porsche to build ICE or EV models on the same line, depending on demand. Not shove cylinders and gearboxes in cars never intended to carry them.

Porsche has confirmed that instead of having the batteries under your feet, the sports twins will heap their cells behind the passenger compartment, meaning a low driving position and 'mid-engined' feel. A big dependency on harvesting regen will keep the battery smaller but we'd expect a lot more overlap with the 911's performance due to instant electric acceleration. That was never allowed in the old days.

Let's not forget the Taycan and Macan are superb daily EVs. But do enough people *want* those traits in a Boxster? It's not just us that reckons it's Porsche's biggest gamble for a quarter century. **OK**

RENDER: ANDREI AVARVARII

07

DACIA
VA-088-MV

Dacia Bigster

It wasn't a long meeting at Dacia HQ… "Right folks, what are we calling the SUV that's bigger than the Duster?" Frankly, that's why we like a Dacia. Does what it says on the tin. And the timing couldn't be better for this flagship – crossover demand remains high, but mainstream brands are squeezed on price.

Along comes this mini-Disco moon buggy with a projected price of £25k–£30k and suddenly a Kuga or Qashqai look a bit out of ideas. Clever mild hybrid tech is imported from Renault (the Clio is among the best electrified superminis) yet Dacia claims the Bigster will be around 150kg lighter than the establishment's family 4x4s. Plus, the boss insists his customers aren't asking for touchscreens or haptic switches. So knobs and buttons will do just fine inside. Hopes are high that this is 2025's common sense champion. **OK**

“WE’D EXPECT A LOT MORE OVERLAP WITH THE 911’S PERFORMANCE DUE TO INSTANT ELECTRIC ACCELERATION”

OI, 2025: WHAT’S OCCURIN’?

TG**’s predictions for the coming year**

F1 WORLD CHAMP LANCE STROLL

Adrian Newey designs a rocket ship so fast veteran Alonso won’t be able to keep up. Lance strolls to the title

TESLA ROADSTER ON SALE (DEFINITELY)

Revealed in 2017 with promises of sales in 2020. Then 2022. Um, 2024. Surely 2025 is the year of the rocket assisted hyper Tesla?

SINGER CAYENNE DIESEL

California was always going to run out of baggy 964s. Next up, a carbon bodied, Williams fettled 1,000lb ft *Panzer*

FORD REVIVES SCORPIO, PROBE AND EDSEL

Undeterred by lukewarm reactions to the Capri, Ford resurrects ‘classic’ names on its fleet of electric snooze boxes

FLYING CAR FAILS TO GO ON SALE

Shock: you can’t pop to the shops in a flat pack helicopter. See also: hydrogen cars, self driving cars, and electric hypercars

BURN OUT OR FADE AWAY?

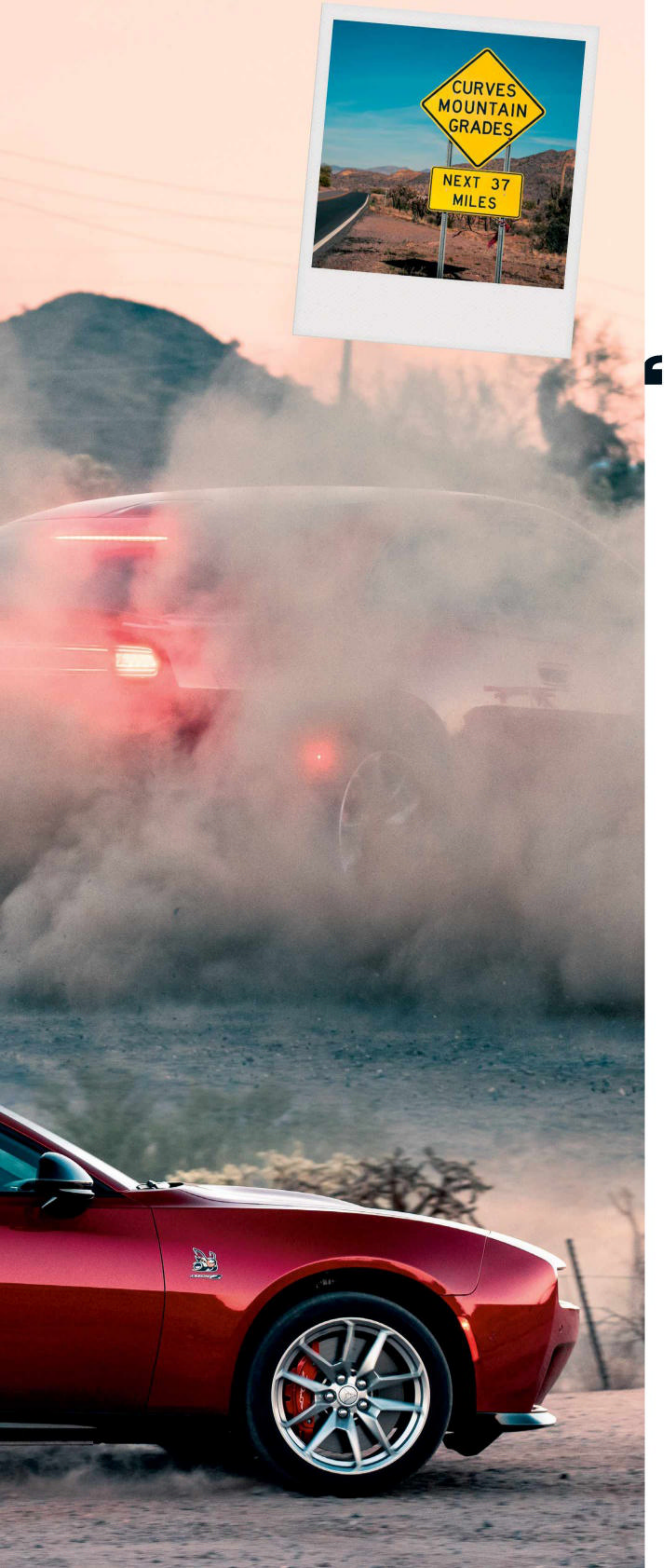
By Switching from V8 to electric with fake noise, has Dodge missed the point of a muscle car completely?

WORDS TOM FORD **PHOTOGRAPHY** HARRY RUDD

08

DODGE CHARGER DAYTONA ➔

“THIS CHARGER IS HERESY ACCORDING TO THE CHURCH OF V8”



“IS that one of those new *soy* Chargers? The one that’s all electric?” says Devon, a man in his silver years who drives a truck, but also has a V8 petrol powered Dodge Challenger back home, implying that electricity is feeble and… somehow left wing. A case not supported should he investigate the woke electricity that powers his home and drop a live toaster in his bath. I simply switch on Dodge’s new electric Charger Daytona and start to rev it. He flinches at the startup – it’s got the kind of exhaust fireup flare you get when someone lops the exhaust off a V8 with an angle grinder – and his face unfurls in wonder. “Well, I’ll be damned…” he exclaims, calling his buddies over. “Maybe it’s not so bad after all.”

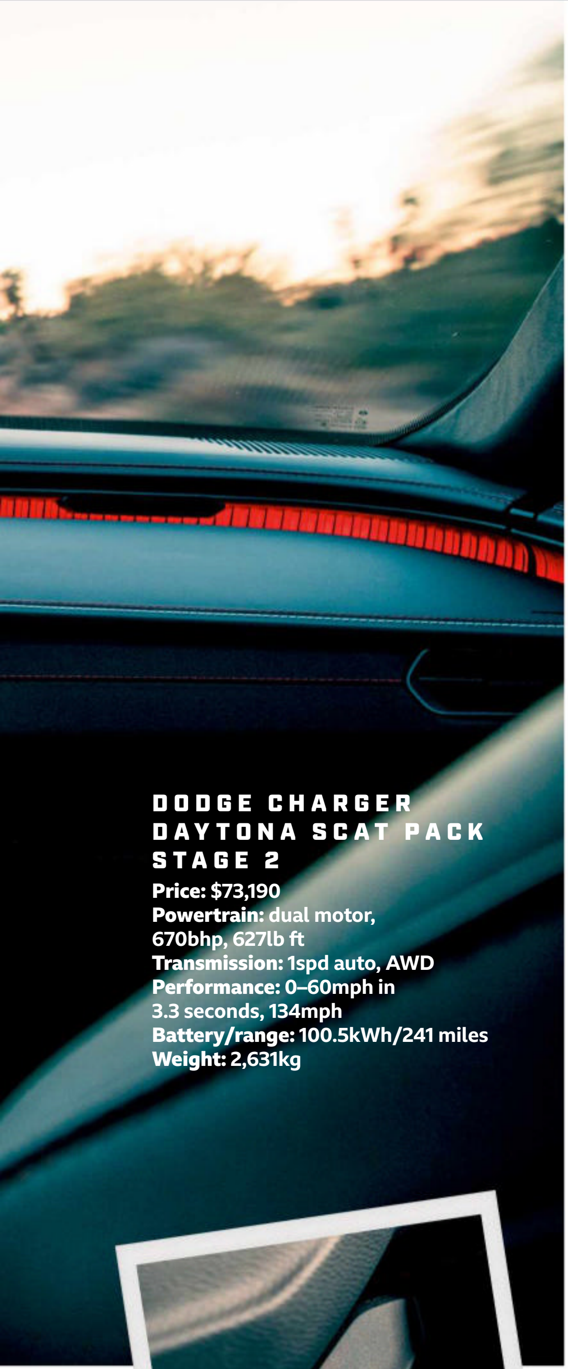
Amazing how a bit of theatre can change people’s minds, and before they left, this slice of grey dollar was suddenly a lot keener on the idea of an electric muscle car. But that’s the issue Dodge is facing right there, born, lived and buried in one 10-minute conversation. Nominative determinism has bitten, and this EV Charger is pure electric heresy according to the Church of V8. And the Church is puritanical: anything short of a procharged 7.3-litre Hemi on open headers with the fuel efficiency of an Iowa class battleship would cause coarse frown lines in the foreheads of the faithful. So it’s a tricky spot for a company that has built a modern reputation on Hellcats adept at turning unleaded into tyre smoke at will. You’ve got the muscle car faithful and those interested in EVs, and in the Venn diagram of ownership, the crossover is micron thick. Dodge reckons this is the “world’s first electric muscle car”. But that might be because no one’s really thought it necessary to build one.

Dodge has gone for the more pragmatic approach to touchscreen tech and just glued a couple of Nintendo Switches to the dashboard

Rolling through the canyons of Arizona in a red Dodge Charger, blacktop shimmering in the heat, yellow lines looping through sweeping corners like a thrown rope and noise burbling away beneath, it's a classic American scene. A bloody cell pulsing through black veins of desert. And yet it's a new way of thinking for Dodge. The most obvious news is that noise. How? Well, the Fratzonic chambered exhaust stuffed under the car uses a couple of subwoofers and a 600W amp to move air through resonating chambers and create the familiar exhaust sound. Pure theatre, but it does make a statement. And that's what Dodge is all about here – it wants you to think of the new Charger as a muscle car first, and an electric car second. A car that looks, sounds, drives and performs like a Dodge Charger. And that's a tough one for EVs where horsepower is cheap but character is hard.

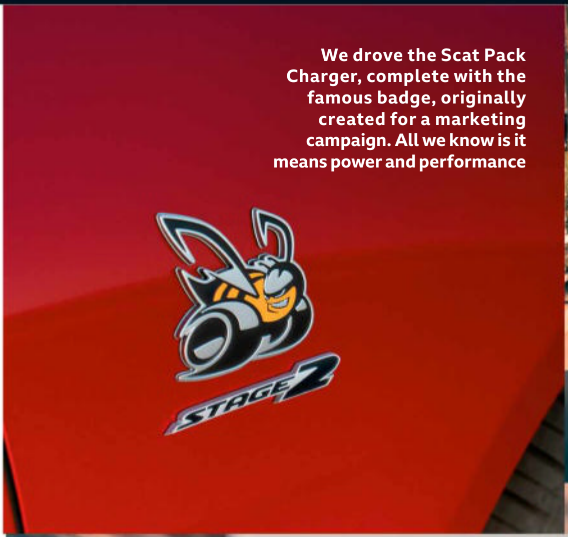
Still, it looks the part. A widebody two door (there are no narrow bodies), strong shoulders, coupe roofline and front and rear 'racetrack' light signatures. There's a meanness to the front that apes classic Chargers, a strong set of visual graphics that make it look like a vision of the near future. In fact, it looks a bit like 1960s futurism, where we still all have largely the same stuff, just a bit more fancy and powered by a thimble reactor in the glovebox. *Back to the Future* vibes rather than an edgier dystopian sci-fi. Yes there's an efficiency aiding pass through spoiler in the nose called the 'R-wing', but that's almost invisible until you get close. And other than that, this could be a petrol powered car. Which, incidentally, it will be; in 2025 there'll be a couple of straight-six twin-turbo powered cars, so all is not lost if you can't live without a petrol engine.

Which brings us to the horsepower issue. Because that's not an issue at all for a modern EV, and that's equally true of the Charger. There are dual motors, one at either end to give all-wheel drive. They're the same output at 335bhp, and the car runs 630bhp with a 40bhp 10-second 'PowerShot' from a steering wheel button for the full herd. That translates into a car capable of 0–60mph in just 3.3 seconds – faster than the last Hellcat V8 – with a modest 134mph top speed. It has a 10.5-second quarter mile, which is rapid enough. Then there are the modes, which range from the usual Auto/Wet/Sport and Track, to more specific settings like Drag and Drift/Donut. There's also a Race Prep mode to precondition the battery for high output discharge and keep the car delivering for 'at least' 10 passes at the strip, or a good few laps at the track. Which all sounds pleasingly hooliganish.

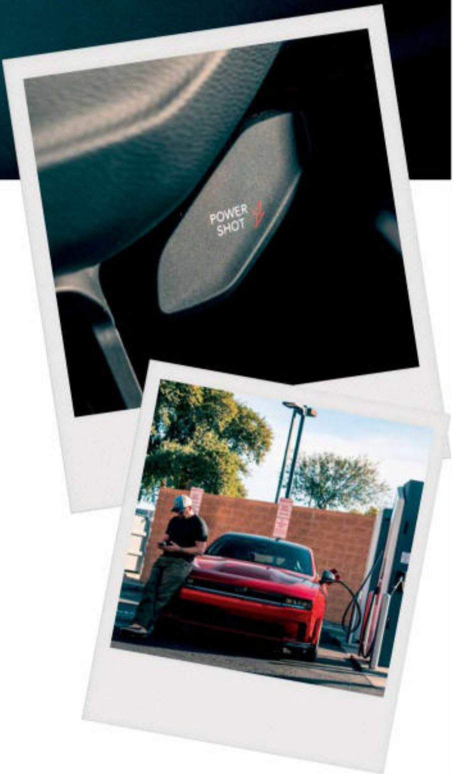


DODGE CHARGER DAYTONA SCAT PACK STAGE 2

Price: $73,190
Powertrain: dual motor, 670bhp, 627lb ft
Transmission: 1spd auto, AWD
Performance: 0–60mph in 3.3 seconds, 134mph
Battery/range: 100.5kWh/241 miles
Weight: 2,631kg



We drove the Scat Pack Charger, complete with the famous badge, originally created for a marketing campaign. All we know is it means power and performance



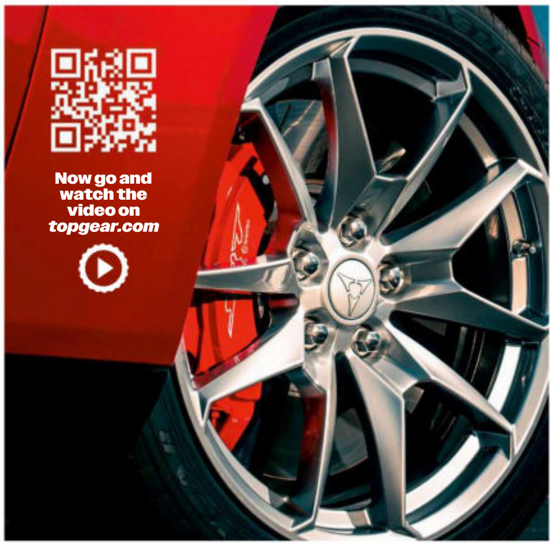
“IT’S CAPABLE OF 0-60MPH IN 3.3SECS – FASTER THAN THE LAST HELLCAT V8”

The truth is somewhat less intense. Let's be honest, American specific cars have a different infrastructure perspective, so they don't tend to be suited to European tastes. Cruising around at the speed limit, the Charger is excellent. Quiet and calm, with a decent ride. The exhaust (we'll just call it that) noise knocks back to the point you forget about it, and looking out over the bonnet and back over the rear arches, you really do feel like this big coupe has a lot of the right stuff in place. It's fast, linear and good at straight line traction. But start to push it in the corners and everything gets a lot less precise. Part of that is due to the hefty kerbweight of over 2.6 tonnes – and part is down to a drivetrain that feels like it could do with some more rear bias and front end bite. The steering's too light, the brakes – although powerful – suffer from snatchiness that was common with earlier EVs as they push through brake regen into friction braking. So it doesn't feel as up for it as the advertising might suggest.

The same goes for the modes. Track doesn't feel that tied down, and Drag isn't neck snapping. But the most disappointing is the donut/drift mode. Essentially it locks out the front motor and stiffens the damping, but that leaves you with 'only' 335bhp. Which sounds like enough, but with 325-section rear tyres and hefty tonnage, the Charger can't do a standing burnout. Which isn't useful, but is fun. You can get the car to drift, and initiating is pretty easy, but this isn't a car that ever feels natural. The limited slip diff in the rear motor loses interest once you've scrubbed speed at the end of a drift and feels like it defaults out to an open diff, killing momentum. Similarly, if you whip the car into a donut and get any mention of rearward movement with the tyres spinning, it bogs. A feature presumably there to protect mechanical bits, but not something you expect. These are not useful metrics, but given the pitch for the car as a testosterone fuelled EV, it feels like a bit of a miss.

But maybe we're missing the point – there's already an 800+bhp Banshee version on the way that's set to be more aggressive (like an SRT in the Dodge pantheon) and these earlier cars are more core. And the new car seemed to get a much better reception than we expected. You'd think an electric Dodge Charger would be unacceptable and yes, there's still suspicion, but from what we saw, 'the people' seem to be more intrigued than offended. There were a couple of punchy comments about "going woke", but probably 80 per cent we talked to seemed keen or agnostic.

The main problem here is that Dodge is trying to generate the same feelings as the old stuff, by using the same tropes as the V8s. That's... complicated. Do it well and you get a distorted view of 'future' powertrain that takes the diehards along for a bit. Do it badly and you end up as a pantomime horse. The new Charger is a bit of both. Ⓣ



The nose, boot and wheel badges are called 'Fratzogs' – an invented symbol and name from the early 1960s that represented power, precision and engineering in Dodge world, revived here

"YOU CAN GET THE CAR TO DRIFT, BUT IT NEVER FEELS NATURAL"

The Charger is surprisingly practical. What looks like a boot (trunk) is actually a hatchback with flop-down seats

Bonnet 'R' wing named after Gary Romberg, NASA boffin who worked on Saturn V then designed the huge stand-up rear spoilers for Dodge's 200mph 1960s NASCAR effort

70°
51° OUT
8:53
No Device Connected
Drive Modes
Track Setup
Drag
Track
Sport
Auto
Wet/Snow
Custom
App Settings
AUTO ECO
A/C

09

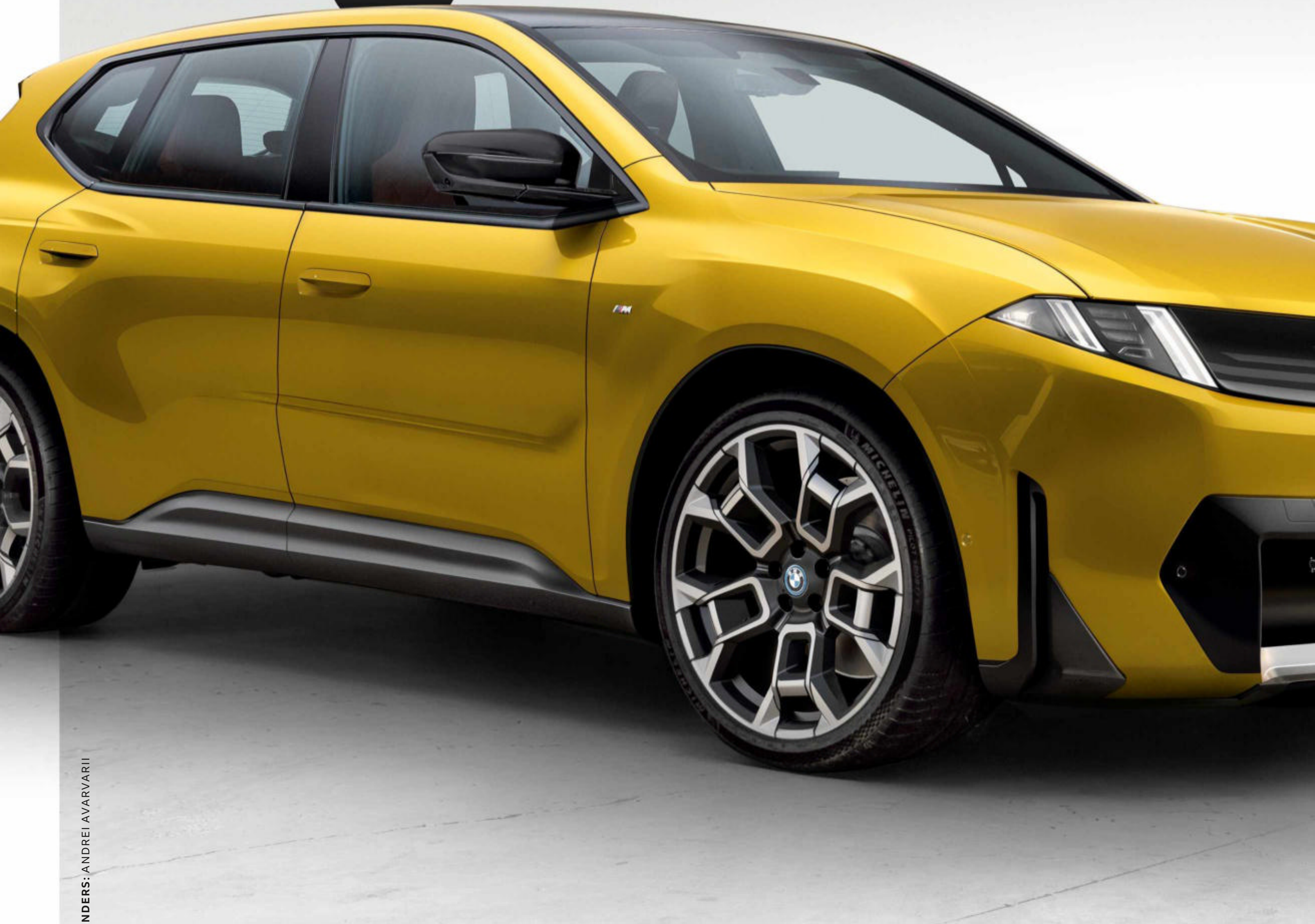
BMW Neue Klasse

It's hard to know what's more tantalising about BMW's imminent Neue Klasse generation of *neue* autos: the prospect of exciting gains with battery tech and range, or the fact that the design language that created (caused?) the XM is about to be thrown in the bin. Toughie, innit? Either way, there's a lot riding on it: big boss Oliver Zipse has called it "the biggest single investment in the history of the company". No pressure then.

Two cars will kickstart the overhaul in 2025. First an SUV (duh) to replace the iX3, then what amounts to an electric 3-Series. Now we're talking. The Hofmeister kink survives and the kidney grilles won't be anywhere near as gopping – X cars get a vertical design, with a horizontal treatment for saloons and sportier stuff. Noice.

The concepts have looked right on point, a far cry from when Domagoj Dukec – formerly head of design – said some years ago: "It is not our goal to please everyone in the world." Approx 1.75m cars sold in the first nine months of 2024 suggests customers are happy, but opinion is polarised. Neue Klasse might yet be Dukec's atonement.

If so it'll be a parting gift, having been a (supposedly willing) victim of design director Adrian van Hooydonk's *Succession*-esque reshuffle last September. It felt like an admission that the old team had gone astray. But he's convinced



RENDERS: ANDREI AVARVARII

BMW is on the right path. “You know how close the i3 and i8 were to their concept cars, that’s what’s going to happen here.” Please let it be so. The Z4 concept climbdown still haunts us.

And what of the substance? This’ll be BMW’s sixth generation of eDrive tech. It says the batteries – supplied by Rimac – will have 20 per cent more energy density, offered in 75, 90 and 105kWh sizes. Efficiency could rise by 25 per cent, with range up 30 per cent on the current crop. An 800V system will improve charging speeds, also by 30 per cent. You’ll be unplugging from the service station before Costa’s finest brew has reached a drinkable temperature.

Less has been said about performance, but we’ll learn more soon. BMW’s ‘heart of joy brain’ will integrate the powertrain and driving dynamics and is said to be good for one whole megawatt. That’s... 1,341bhp. Joy might not be the right word.

After that, there’ll be another five Neue Klasses by the end of 2027, and it doesn’t stop at EVs, combustion will be part of it too, so customers can just pick the powertrain they want. Unlike some, BMW hasn’t anchored itself to an electric only cutoff date, and going by the latest trends that’s looking like a sound business choice. The market will decide. Let’s hope it likes what’s coming. **JH**

M RC 519E
M DC 4628E

“THE NEW KIDNEY GRILLES WON’T BE ANYWHERE NEAR AS GOPPING”

THE CURIOUS CASE OF BMW BUTTONS

There’s a tech-led revolution going on inside the Neue Klasse

If there’s a revolution going on outside, then inside it’s a full blown rebellion. Every Neue Klasse car will get BMW’s bold new iDrive layout, which represents a complete rethink on how to integrate tech into a car.

The rotary controller is gone. Radically, there’s no instrument cluster. Instead a comprehensive 3D head-up display houses speed, range, battery level, navigation – all to keep your eyes on the road and hands on the wheel.

Meanwhile the matrix backlit touchscreen is closer to the driver. It runs BMW’s Operating System X software, which goes big on customisation. BMW expects more use of voice control, so its assistant is based on Amazon’s Alexa.

The temperature controls sit permanently on the touchscreen. Is there a danger of iDrive becoming a digital hellscape? It’s all about finding a balance. The windscreen heater gets a button because you might want to use it with gloves on, and there are physical controls for the gear shifter, mirror adjustment and volume. Phew.

The party piece is Panoramic Vision, not a screen but an expanse of head-up tech, which you can fill with tailored info running the width of the dashboard. Excessive? Perhaps. But it looks like nothing else out there. Which feels entirely appropriate. **JH**

10

Renault 5 Turbo 3E

Renault's bringing ~~sexy~~ mid-engined hot hatch heroics back, via the medium of the deliriously arched Turbo 3E. It'll be a proper road car. That you can buy. With money. And outrageous fortune.

Because while today we rightly hail the return of the king of hot hatchery, it's a) really very expensive and b) quite limited. But that's for later.

Let us add some important context charting the stratospheric progress of Planet Hot Hatch over the past 50 years via two amusing factoids. The first Renault 5 powered just by electricity was unveiled back in 1972 with a heady range of 37 miles. In 1980, the original mid-engined Renault 5

RENAULT
R5TURBO3E
NNT 505

> “THE TURBO 3E SILHOUETTE IS UNMISTAKABLE - SQUAT AND LAIRY”

R5TURBO3E
R5TU

THE FORCE OF THE ORIGINAL R5 IS STRONG HERE

Two tone bodywork gives strong 'still waiting to get the new bits sprayed' vibes

R5TURBO3E
RENAULT
URBO3E

Turbo won hearts and minds with just 156bhp. Of course, this being the age of overinflation means this brand new electric 5 Turbo needs a *soupçon* more power than its granddaddy managed. Renault appears to have tipped the entire lot in, because this Turbo 3E – which follows the lairy concept car whose tyre smoke we're still waving away from 2023 – pumps out an astronomical 500bhp.

Five hundred horsepower. For a small, punchy little Renault city car. That's delivered via a pair of rear in-wheel motors – a fairly, well, revolutionary stepchange that promises better power transfer and control, but does add a lot more unsprung mass – allowing for a 0–62mph time of just 3.5secs. Perhaps the engineers inhaled a lungful of burnt rubber, because that's not just deliriously fast, that's – as Renault rightly states – "a time worthy of supercars".

Renault hasn't yet specified battery size but does promise a carbon superstructure at the new 5 Turbo 3E's base, allowing both "lightness and maximum rigidity". Weight? No idea. But the 2023 concept car weighed in at just under 1,500kg. Ditto the regular, front drive production 5 and Alpine A290.

Speaking of the regular new Renault 5… the production car has that fresh design at its heart (unlike the Turbo 3E concept that was a carbon fibre lookalike of the original R5), albeit with the mother of all bodykits strapped on to doff its cap to the wild 1980s original. Specifically in the form of those rear quarter vents, here reincarnated for the electric age.

The silhouette's unmistakable – squat, squared off, lairy – but with touches like those reimagined fog lights, monster wheels, vented bonnet, delicate roof spoiler and not at all delicate rear diffuser.

Design boss Gilles Vidal told us there'll be endless scope for customisation of the new R5 Turbo 3E, with a new internal team being scrambled to cater to buyers' choice of trim, paint and retro liveries.

Why not have it as an Alpine – is that not the sportier side? Apparently, even though Alpine now exists as its own entity, it's perfectly OK for Renault to do wild things. Nailed that brief, we'd proffer.

"This car is to show EVs can be emotional, not just white appliances," Vidal told *TopGear*.

Renault *hasn't* told *TopGear* exactly how many of these new R5 Turbo 3Es it'll build, but we're expecting somewhere in the region of 2,000 (over 4,000 of the R5 Turbo 1 and Turbo 2s were made, and nearly 3,000 Clio V6s, for context), with a price stretching to well over £100k. *Mon dieu!* Renault says it's confident it has buyers for every last one. **VP**

LAND B

Exactly how tough is Toyota's new Land Cruiser? We rounded up its gnarliest rivals and headed to Wales

WORDS TOM FORD **PHOTOGRAPHY** JONNY FLEETWOOD

RUISERS

“Not even scraped,

smooth as butter,” says the idiot, as he drops the front end of the new £80,000 Toyota Land Cruiser off a rock shelf, sidestep landing with an excruciating CRUMP on a sharply Paleozoic bit of Wales.

“That was it!” exclaims idiot #2, referring to the thing he should have warned idiot #1 about *before* he drove into it. Not the Toyota’s fault, but driver error. Or rather spotter error, and I’m sticking with that.

But that’s what you get when you allow the inmates access to the car keys of the asylum – halfhearted health and safety and a whole bunch of actively dangerous enthusiasm. And yet here we are, off road in the kind of cars that can actually do it, rather than soft roaders that have the butch visual cues of all wheel drive, but the traction of a greyhound on a polished wooden floor.

So what have we assembled? Well, the Toyota Land Cruiser 250 is the newest, £80-odd grand’s worth of First Edition (five grand more than standard), with a guttural 2.8-litre, four-cylinder turbodiesel up front. It’s got an 8spd auto, an underwhelming 201bhp and a more agreeable 369lb ft of torque. Ladder chassis, two diff locks and some tricks up its venerable nameplate sleeves. And yes, we know this is a Land Cruiser Prado rather than the full fat 300 that still serves in the rest of the world, but that’s what we get here in the UK.

Next up is the Land Rover Defender P300e, possibly the LC’s biggest challenger. Just under £80k, like the Toyota (within 500 quid), this time with a 2.0-litre 4cyl petrol and plug-in hybrid assistance for happy tax. Again with an 8spd auto, this time a monocoque, but more power and torque at 300bhp and 472lb ft. They’re also almost the same weight at 2.5ish tonnes depending on spec, making this a proper showdown for a couple of the oldest names in off roading.

But we’ve brought along some context. The G-Wagen is here because it also represents one of the most revered names in getting it done, albeit in an eccentric spec for this test. This is the new G500; a 3.0-litre straight six petrol turbo with mild hybrid and 442bhp/413lb ft, a nine-speed auto box and near 2.7 tonne kerbweight. It’s also got a positively gilded £146,095 price. The straight six turbodiesel G450d is also nine-speed and mild hybrid, but puts out 367bhp and 553lb ft and would have been a better fit, but it hasn’t arrived yet and neither has the intriguing all electric G580e with its tank turn ability, so the petrol version will fly the flag here. Plus, you can’t really do expensive 4x4s without something G-shaped. It just wouldn’t be right.

The young pretender with the old man’s face is the Ineos Grenadier. Defiantly off road biased, and it fits the bill in terms of cost. This is the chunky Trialmaster variant, and starts at just over £76k – the cheapest here – with a lovely 3.0-litre straight six BMW B57 turbodiesel, 8spd auto and more levers than you can shake a lever shaped stick at. Some 245bhp and 331lb ft means it splits the Defender and the LC250 in terms of output, but weighs a bit more if you chuck the options at it at 2.8 tonnes. Which means they’re all relatively evenly matched in parameters and cost. Well, apart from the vastly expensive G.

“HERE WE ARE, OFF ROAD IN THE KIND OF CARS THAT CAN ACTUALLY DO IT”

KM74 NLT
TOYOTA
GX74 ZGW

The test is simple – we're going to do an off road couple of days with the scoring weighted in favour of how these cars handle the rough stuff. On road manners will be taken into account, but not as much as usual; this is more about dirt, scuffed knuckles and ease of use. We're using Welsh public access byways in winter: not the scariest 4x4 trails possible, but they're real. An off road park might offer more punishing tests, but they invite extremity when you know you can get smartly pulled out by a tractor. Here, it's about getting from point A (middle of nowhere) to point B (the far side of nowhere) off road without damaging the equipment, ourselves, or everyone's dignity. Mostly.

To be fair, we did have a series of tests to deal with, each stitched together through the weft of gorgeous Welsh winter countryside. Snow, ice, slippery rock and the warm greens and browns of heather that's tucked itself up for the winter. The valley and forest views the kind of things they put on postcards, the sunshine occasional, bright and unheated. The tracks were never less than rough, mostly narrow – as in brushing both sides of the car narrow – often rocky and seriously rutted. And all the cars were on standard-but-optional off road tyres that you can buy direct from the manufacturers, although we did drop the pressures for a bit more friction. These are cars that you buy from the dealership, in other words.

We began with wading, though, to be honest, the rivers we crossed were only just up over the front bumpers. Technical enough to test, but with all of the cars capable of at least 700mm of swim depth (Land Cruiser and G-Wagen) or 800mm (Grenadier and Defender), none was bothered about getting wet. The G-Class and LC don't have specific wading systems, but the Land Rover has a wading function from the Terrain Response system as well as wade sensors which lift the only air suspension system here, and the Ineos has a wading mode that does all sorts of things like disconnecting the seat heaters and pausing the fans to stop the car drawing extra water into the engine bay. Not necessary in this case, but all were off to a flying/floating start.

It's probably wise to note here that all of these cars were impressive without doing anything to them at all. Just leave them to it. But then things got a bit more serious, and it was time to start pressing some buttons and, in the Ineos's case, shunting some levers. The Land Cruiser is intuitive, easy to understand and largely infallible. Pop it into neutral, flick the 4Low switch and you're in the meaty gearing. There's a button for the centre diff to pair the front and rear wheels in lockstep, a button for a rear differential to bind the back axle side to side, with no lockable front diff. It does get a button to disconnect the anti-roll bar – excellent for extra articulation – and it has crawl control, a kind of off road cruise control – but the throttle modulation was so good, it wasn't really necessary. And the approach, breakover and departure angles were solid enough to prevent most of the scrapes. In fact, the side steps were the things that touched down the most – lift or remove them and it probably wouldn't have tapped the underside at all. But the main feature of the LC is the way it just happily pottered around without any fuss. A little bit of diff switching, but otherwise unflappable.

The same can be said of the G-Class, which proved to be an absolute master at deliberate calm, subduing the environment with casual ease. There's a little off road panel in the centre of the dash that allows for one-press low ratios (from neutral), the centre, rear and front locking differential buttons handily marked as 1, 2 and 3 (on the fly). In fact, the G could manage most things with just the centre diff locked, and the other two lockers engaged as you encountered slip, like lock picks for the riddle of grip. It genuinely never struggled, a feeling of refined and expensive engineering shot through the whole experience. It's a fancy machine for crunching around off road, but my word, does it work. Mind you, the 500 also sounds remarkably like an old M3 doing

The most expensive car here, and you can tell in the quality. But the G comes from military stock, so it's very upright and well laid out. Now with Mercedes latest MBUX in twin 12.3-inch screens. Slick

Auto Terrain Response selected

The Defender is more design-led than the G-Class and better looking than the other two. Probably the best interior, but Terrain Response hides behind the heater controls and failed to respond, now and again

The 250 is well laid out and practical, but some of the plastics don't feel like £80k+. Also, even though the new touchscreen and digital driver's display aren't the most cutting edge, it works

OFFROAD MODE

Rugged, hardwearing and big buttoned, the Ineos is a practical space. Not as big inside as you might think, but rubber floors and pop-out bungs mean you can hose it out. This Utility trim suits it

Nothing else focuses the mind like the threat of freezing water around the feet

dyno pulls in a room next door when you're off roading. It's a weird sonic experience next to the others.

The Ineos, on the other hand, is much more deliberate. It's blindingly obvious where the Grenadier is coming from, eliminating points of failure, trying to engage the driver/operator with what's actually going on underneath the car. To get low ratio you need to be in neutral from the 'bat' gear selector paddle (BMW sourced), and hoik the 'ball' selector around. That locks the centre diff if it's in the correct position, and you can then lock the front and rear diffs from the roof mounted switches, which takes a couple of presses and confirmations and a bit of patience while everything works itself out. Off road mode (in low ratio) does stuff like disable the parking sensors and seatbelt warnings too, which is a nice touch, but there's a lot to do in the Ineos, and it's not always obvious. It's intentional and considered, but not exactly the king of convenience. Once in the right settings though, the Trialmaster was calm and unstoppable. It also felt like the one that really wouldn't mind being bounced off a few fence posts – the only car here where a few dents would just add to the character, rather than looking like expensive mistakes.

The biggest surprise of the four was the Defender. Because it made the most fuss when it came to the rougher stuff. It's almost the least obvious of the four in the cabin with regards to off road operations, the Terrain Response system now hidden one press behind the heater controls in the touchscreen, instead of in a separate dial. Although there's a configurable mode that let's you choose individual settings, the Defender would rather you choose your terrain and let the system work it out. And it does, largely. But when faced with nastier climbs and slippery sections, Terrain Response doesn't make it look quite as easy as a car with full locked diffs. The air suspension on full height also gets terribly stiff kneed, meaning that the Defender was notably lifting wheels when the other cars weren't, and then scrabbling as the system allowed enough slip to decide to lock the diff across the axle. The Defender did everything, but compared with the others, it looked fussier, pawed the air more and generally made the obstacles more exciting. Some of that was probably down to a sharp throttle delivery that caused it to snatch across the slow dribbly bits, possibly caused by 'help' from the electric motor at small inputs. Whatever, it wasn't the all conquering manifestation of prowess we were expecting.

That feeling remained over a series of climbs and rock crawls, 200ft water troughs and various technical sections. The Defender dealing with things but making a slight meal of it, the Ineos confidently

25%
Keep in
low gear
Cadwch mewn
gêr isel

Going a little further afield?

LeTech's Ineos Grenadier conversion is definitely one for the inner child. How can you not love this thing? The trick bit is the portal axle: simply put, the differential and driveshafts connected to it are repositioned higher up and hub reduction gear makes mincemeat of the toughest going. The Grenadier's ground clearance increases from 186 to 450mm, its wading depth to 1,000mm. There are bigger coil springs and shock absorbers, it's fitted with one piece forged alloys and massive BF Goodrich Mud Terrain KM3 tyres, and our car also has a Warn Zeon 12V electric winch with a pull capacity of 12,000 pounds. And roof mounted LED lights that could floodlight Wembley stadium.

If it looks like it belongs on the moon, we get to try it somewhere that resembles another planet: Iceland. So we've already conquered a volcano before the sun has got its hat on (it's dark here until 11am in winter), and driven up – not just across – a fast flowing river. The regular Grenadier can take serious abuse but this thing feels post-apocalyptic. Then we're granted access to the black sand beach at Reynisfjara. We're running reduced tyre pressures – just 19psi – but it's still a challenge. At Grindavik, the lava has just about cooled; a week later, the nearby volcano erupts again. Ineos reckons the Grenadier LeTech will cost circa £180k, but what price this sort of capability? JBARLOW

> "THE TRACKS WERE NEVER LESS THAN ROUGH, OFTEN ROCKY AND VERY RUTTED"

There are more direct routes, but frankly they're nowhere near as much fun

"OK lads, first one back to the cabin gets to sit closest to the fire"

“THE G-WAGEN IS AN ABSOLUTE MASTER OF DELIBERATE CALM”

What’s even the point of driving through water if there’s no one standing there to splash?

bullying its way through and the G and the LC picking their way across the features with minimum, light-footed fuss. And no, it wasn't down to the drivers either, as we swapped, and all the various modes were engaged for different sections, tried and tested.

After two days of off roading and a few hours of normal… roading, we had a solid appreciation of what each car was capable of. And the results were surprising. If you're serious about going off road, then the Defender might not be the best choice. It's very capable, but Land Rover seems to have backed off the ultimate off roader idea in favour of a car that's much more capable on road. A plug-in hybrid with genuinely impressive road manners is likely to be something most owners will appreciate more of the time, and when they do find themselves off road, it'll still do the business. But in this company, it's not a smackdown. The Defender, bluntly, had to work the hardest to get where it was going.

The Ineos comes next, for a couple of reasons. The lesser being that it's simply not that great to drive on the road, with slow, non self-centring steering and lollopy body control. But more importantly in this test and off road situations, it just needs a touch too much messing with. Diffs that don't show up as locked until you move, multiple button presses, some big thunks and quirks to the transmission engagements. You do get used to it, and it does have an industrial appeal, but it's a car that needs you to be fully aware of what you're buying into. And the thing you're purchasing is a shire horse of a thing – heavy, deliberate, unstoppable. It appeals on a base, old school level, but it's not the most rounded.

Which leaves the G-Wagen and the Land Cruiser. The G almost takes itself out of contention by being a big petrol rather than the more torquey diesel, but we simply cannot ignore the price of either model. At getting on for £60k more than any of the other cars here, it's not really fighting in the same battle. That's a shame, because the Mercedes really is a masterclass in lightfooted traversing. There's just something so unflustered and commanding about the way it deals with all and any off road situations, a feeling of marrow deep

MERCEDES-BENZ G500

Price: £146,095 (£147,595 as tested)
Engine: 3.0-litre TT 6cyl, 442bhp, 413lb ft
Transmission: 9spd auto, AWD
Performance: 0–62mph in 5.4 seconds, 130mph
Economy: 26.0mpg, 227g/km CO_2
Weight: 2,590kg

LAND ROVER DEFENDER 110 P300E

Price: £79,470 (£93,590 as tested)
Engine: 2.0-litre turbo 4cyl + e-motor, 300bhp, 472lb ft
Transmission: 8spd auto, AWD
Performance: 0–62mph in 7.6 seconds, 119mph
Economy: 101.6mpg, 63g/km CO_2,
Weight: 2,538kg

TOYOTA LAND CRUISER FIRST EDITION

Price: £79,995 (£80,725 as tested)
Engine: 2.8-litre 4cyl turbodiesel, 201bhp, 369lb ft
Transmission: 8spd auto, AWD
Performance: 0–62mph in n/a seconds, 102mph
Economy: 26.6mpg, 279g/km CO_2
Weight: 2,550kg

INEOS GRENADIER TRIALMASTER

Price: £76,140 (£79,517 as tested)
Engine: 3.0-litre 6cyl turbodiesel, 245bhp, 405lb ft
Transmission: 8spd auto, AWD
Performance: 0–62mph in 9.9 seconds, 99mph
Economy: 23.3mpg, 317g/km CO_2
Weight: 2,811kg

engineering. It's good on road, inevitable off it. You can criticise the marginal cabin space and a slightly fancy interior that doesn't suit being covered in Welsh silt, but you can't argue with the capability.

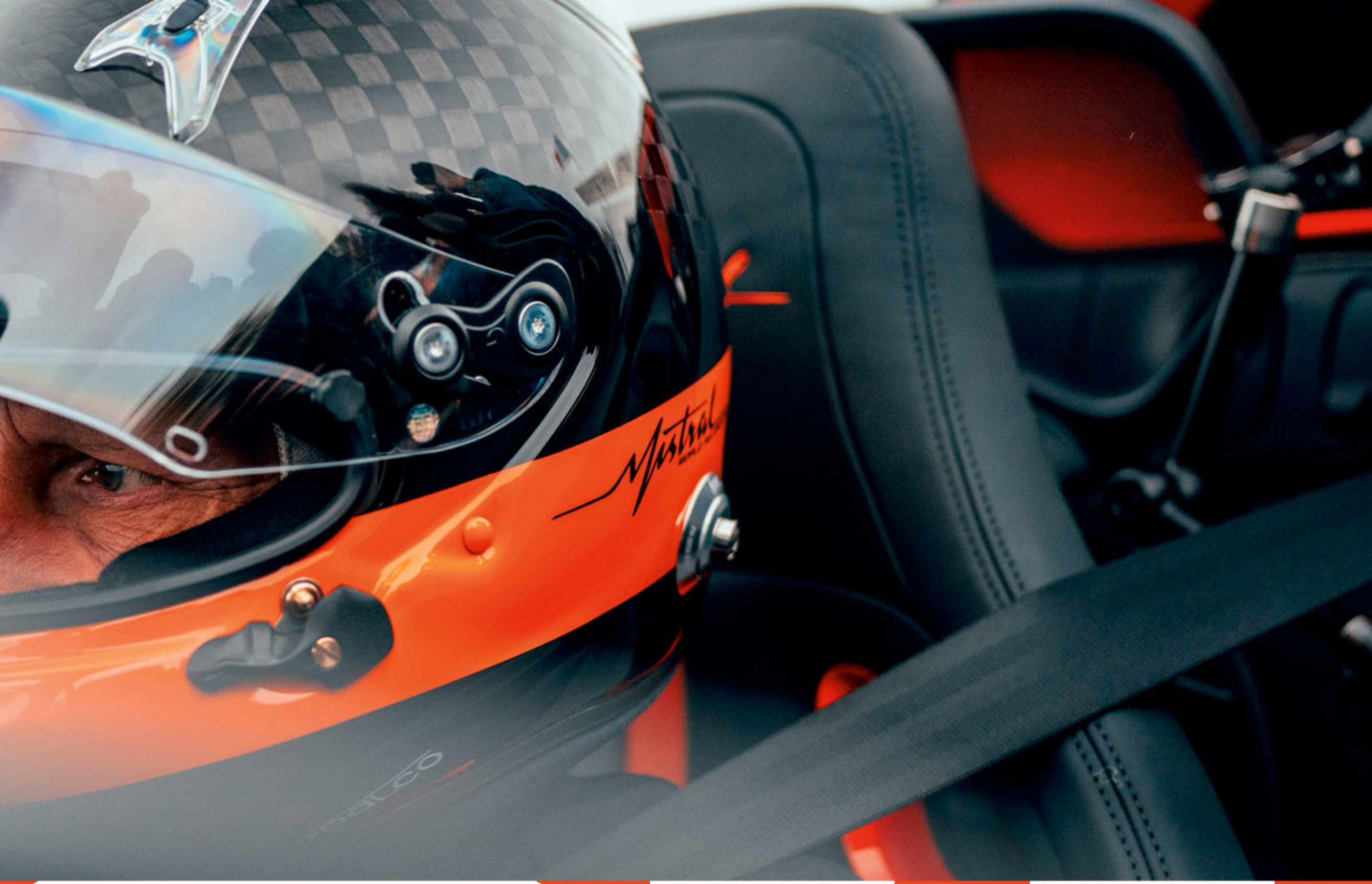
Which leaves our winner, the Toyota Land Cruiser 250. A car that combines an array of talents without being standout in one discipline. It's decent enough on road, with the guttural 4cyl diesel fading into the background after a bit, the impression being that it will continue to gargle away even if you ran it on whisky and goose fat. It looks good, has a pleasing if not overly plush interior, feels small enough to get places and large enough to take things to them. Off road, it never gets concerning. You can flick it in and out of modes that make mincemeat of real situations. The Toyota doesn't feel as posh as the Mercedes – less potential damage guilt, but still too expensive – isn't as agricultural as the Ineos, is more poised than the Defender. More than that, it's the best old school 4x4 SUV for crossing a lumpy bit of Wales in winter without using a road. It's a car that won't just get you from A to B, but across a whole alphabet.

> **"THE TOYOTA WILL CONTINUE TO GARGLE AWAY, EVEN IF YOU RAN IT ON WHISKY AND GOOSE FAT"**

Now go and watch the video on ***topgear.com***

RU

When Bugatti told us it was after the convertible



SH

WORDS OLLIE KEW **PHOTOGRAPHY** RICHARD PARDON

vmax world record… we had to go along for the ride

Silence? At a land speed record attempt? You imagine there'd be excited chatter and bellowing engines, but it's eerily quiet at the Papenburg proving ground in northwestern Germany. Not a breath of wind to knock the rusty leaves from the branches, or disturb the limp trackside wind sock.

Two white pinpricks peer through the mid-morning mist. A faint hiss builds into an air shredding roar and in a neck tweaking rush, a black and orange Bugatti Mistral rips down the main straight. Brake lights and the orange underbelly of the air brake pierce the gloom.

Andy Wallace has just set a new world speed record for a roofless car: 453.91kph (282.04mph). Polite applause ripples from Bugatti's engineers, then silence reigns again. Another day at the office for the world's fastest car company.

Bugatti, as I'm sure you know, has been the speed record final boss this millennium. Veyron: 253mph. Veyron Super Sport: 269mph. There was also a convertible, the Veyron Vitesse, which reached a roofless 254mph back in 2013.

Each of those records was gradually bested by American upstarts SSC and Hennessey until every once in a while, Bugatti drops the vmax mic. Cue the Chiron Super Sport: 304.7724mph in 2019.

But Bugatti seemed content to let Texas own the glory of 'fastest open top road car'. Hennessey's Venom GT Spyder – a dragster V8 claiming asylum in a Lotus Exige – went 265mph a while ago and no one's responded. Koenigsegg keeps roofs firmly attached for flat out runs. Bugatti politely asserted it would never build a convertible Chiron.

The Mistral (named after a southerly French breeze rather than a category five hurricane) cannily wraps the latest Super Sport's mechanicals up in a new coachbuilt body, but all 99 owners are restrained by a factory padlocked limiter to a mere 261mph.

All except one, who cornered Bugatti CEO Mate Rimac at the Goodwood Festival of Well Obviously and pointed out he was the only owner of each Bugatti World Record Edition. Veyron, Vitesse and Chiron. Wouldn't it be great to complete the set with an unleashed Mistral, by throwing in a top speed attempt?

That's why the base retail price for a Mistral is £4.1m, but the owner of this one paid £11.6 million for a car he won't even take delivery of until 2026. Pricey certificate, that. But for a piece of history, to complete the ultimate collection from Bugatti's W16 era? Probably a wise investment.

Usually, speed record attempts are conducted in utmost secrecy just in case there's a whoopsie and Elon's Tesla Roadster is joined in outer space by a brightly coloured streak of carbon fibre. But Bugatti's been brave enough to grant *TopGear* exclusive access over the decades. You'll remember James May briefly holding the record in the Veyron Super Sport, before company test pilot Pierre-Henri Raphanel added 10mph to Captain Slow's total. *TG* mag was on the ground at the Ehra-Lessien test track when the Chiron surged past 300mph in the courageous hands of Andy Wallace.

This time, the invitation was to a little known test facility on the German/Dutch border. Because Bugatti has been reassigned as a joint venture with Croatian electric disruptor Rimac, it's not strictly a tentacle of the Volkswagen Group any longer. Meaning VW's vast test track – the very place the W16 Bugattis were guaranteed to strut their stuff – is now off limits. Its replacement is far from ideal.

Papenburg's oval track has tighter, steeper banked corners, and the straights linking them are only 2.7 miles long: half what you'd enjoy at Ehra, where the runways are so generous the horizon is lost under the curvature of the Earth. Andy Wallace explains a lack of space is merely the *amuse-bouche* of challenges when it comes to laying down a new world record.

"I dunno why you'd try and do it in November," he shrugs in the morning chill. "During the runs there's little tiny bits of – I guess it's not rain – but it's moisture on the screen building up. And you think, 'Hmm, I wonder how much grip there is?'"

Then there's the access bridge over the straight muddling the aerodynamics. "I'm coming under there at 427kph [265mph]. As soon as you get under, it kind of moves the car over, so I guess there's an interaction between all the air under the bridge going on.

"I'm also not using the lane closest to the barrier because you get some instability. As the road goes flat, it sucks the car to the left. You've got to be really careful you don't touch a barrier."

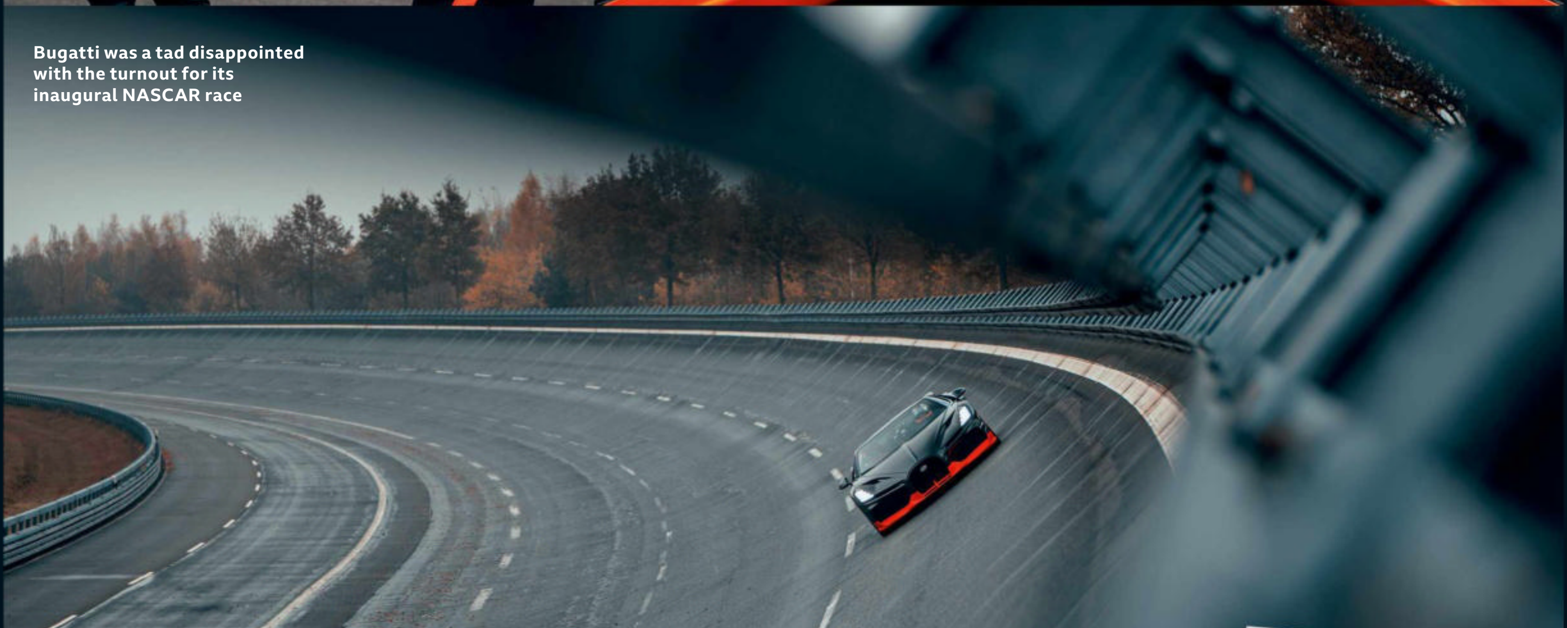
It's the understatement that gets me. A one off, two tonne, 1,578bhp land jet with no roof, trying to drag him into the Armco, and he's ignoring the track speed limit of 155mph for the banking and exiting the bend at almost 190. The ambient temperature is 6°C. Chilly equals good for the hungry turbos, but what the engine gains with denser air the car loses having to headbutt through the foggy soup. Engineers muttered earlier that at the business end of the run, the car would be a net 40 horsepower down.

But I spoiled the result earlier on because this was never in doubt. When we arrived at 7am Bugatti's team of engineers were all sporting puffer jackets with Mistral World Record Car logos, matching the insignia on the underside of the car's wing and its numberplate. I heard a rumour they'd been on a recce weeks earlier (in kinder weather) and already achieved a speed that'd have the Guinness people ripping up their

Mistral
WORLD RECORD CAR
BUGATTI

Presumptuous, perhaps, but it was on the bottom of the wing just in case

Bugatti was a tad disappointed with the turnout for its inaugural NASCAR race



Imagine how fast he could go without the extra weight of a photographer next to him

BUGATTI MISTRAL WORLD RECORD EDITION

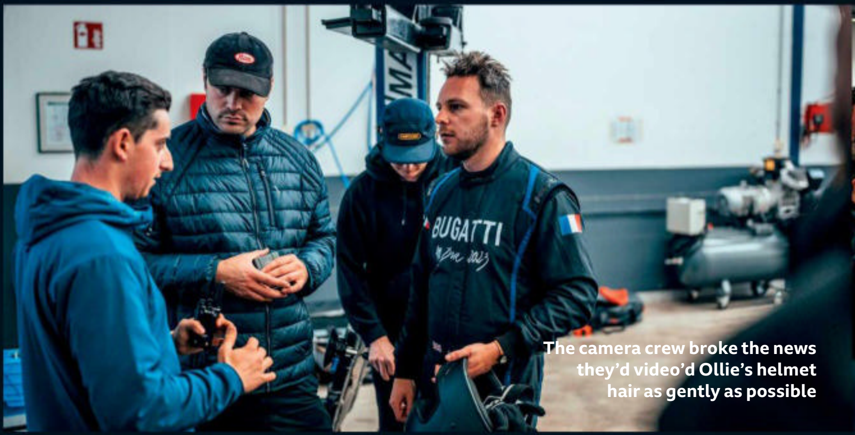
Price: £11.6m
Engine: 7993cc QT W16, 1,578bhp, 1,180lb ft
Transmission: 7spd DCT, AWD
Performance: 0–62mph in 2.5secs, 282mph
Weight: 1,995kg

Now go and watch the video on *topgear.com*

“THE MISTRAL WHOOSHES ME TO AN UTTERLY STABLE 245MPH, THEN PURRS BACK TO THE PITS”

"Don't be scared Mr Drone, we just need you to hold onto today's camera car quite tightly"

"MURKY DAY, SOMEONE ELSE'S £11M ONE-OFF… BEST NOT GO CRAZY"



The camera crew broke the news they'd video'd Ollie's helmet hair as gently as possible

Don't you just hate it when you forget to bring a quid for the lockers?

Everybody say cheese for the circa £20m family photo. That's 5,522bhp of greatness

record book, but what's the point in *telling* people you've been to the moon? This is the era of the permanently sceptical and chronically online. You have to be able to *show* them.

So in addition to the squadron of laptop wielding Bugatti engineers, two nervous looking French blokes from Michelin wincing at the tyres, the owner's family and yours truly, we were joined by an eight-person film crew, an Audi RS6 tracking car carrying a camera worth more than the car itself, and a helicopter flown by Germany's answer to Tom Cruise, a low level daredevil with a penchant for getting the shot.

While the boffins studied power curve graphs and frowned at satellite forecasts, the motion picture division swarmed the Mistral with suction cups, rigging, duct tape and mounts, festooning every angle with cameras and microphones. Andy's carbon helmet was treated to a chapstick-sized camera designed to break off if any force was applied to it, giving viewers a driver's view without compromising his safety. By the time the Mistral was ready for its close up, the interior was a snake pit of wiring and auxiliary power sources, with audio-visual gadgetry vying for passenger space with the on board speed verifying GPS recorders.

Even though Bugattis uniquely quote their tyre pressures to two decimal places, meticulously perform a preflight check at every startup and boast the most accurate speedo in the world, the German regulating authorities weren't going to allow Molsheim to mark its own homework.

That turned out to be a formality. The Michelin *gendarmes* allow Andy six laps on the record tyres: he does a 230mph warm up, then hits 279, 280, 281 and finally 282mph before calling it a day. Tyres swapped, he gives the owner a shotgun ride. I'm not aware of a Guinness world record for the fastest passenger in a production car, but given there's only one road car that's ever been faster and Andy nearly eclipsed his own benchmark while two up… that must be another rosette for the staff room fridge.

With the owner suitably giddy and immediately jetting out of the country, the afternoon's reserved for filming. The Mistral blasts past umpteen times as the Red Baron's great grandson attempts to give us a haircut with his attack chopper.

For ground based car to car video, the 600bhp RS6 is left panting. Happily, Bugatti's brought along its factory runabout Chiron Super Sport, with a wing clipped drone strapped to its backside. I might not hold any records but I've done a fair chunk of driving for video, so I volunteer to drive the practice runs while Team Hollywood sets exposure and depth of field. Pierre-Henri takes the lead in the Chiron Super Sport, Andy's beside me in the now decluttered Mistral barking instructions into a walkie-talkie I can't hear, and we're off, formation flying at 237mph one car length apart. To a Bugatti this is child's play, no more alarming than a motorway convoy.

But we're losing the light so the speed limited camera car peels off, and I'm allowed to give the Mistral all 1,578 beans. Murky afternoon, someone else's £11m one-off… best not go crazy. I do my best to interpret Andy's sign language of when to lift, when to counterintuitively accelerate into the bend to stay set into the banking, and when to bury it. The Mistral whooshes me up to an utterly stable, completely non-eventful 245 miles an hour, then purrs back to the pits.

Helmet off, it's bizarrely refined: the Mistral has spent months in wind tunnel testing and the result is a car that's less buffety at 150mph than a 911 Targa is at 70. The best bit? The noise.

Bugatti's quad-turbo monster has found a new voice in this car, thanks to those snorkel intakes just to the rear of the seats and a much more potent exhaust than the Veyron. This legendary powerplant has always been numbers first and character second, but here all those whooshes, chirrups, sighs and woofles are uncorked. It's fascinating and scary: a fitting final flourish for one of the 21st century's most insane pieces of engineering. One more world record for the W16 before it retires. The storm before the calm.

GOLDEN

The restomod scene has exploded in recent years – we gather four supermodels in Italy to show it's not as easy as it looks...

WORDS JASON BARLOW **PHOTOGRAPHY** LEE BRIMBLE

FZ·667YC
WORLD RALLY CHAMPION
WORLD RALLY CHAMPION

OLDIES

“THE FUTURE ISN’T WHAT IT’S CRACKED UP TO BE”

The future isn't what it's cracked up to be. How else do you explain the surge in popularity of what we now know as the 'restomod'? Three semi-classic Italians and a Swedish interloper sit by a dam at the summit of a mountain, each the purveyor of potent analogue sensation.

The air is thin up here so they're working hard, but then so are we. Want fizzy, granular steering? You've got it. Two Lancias, an Alfa Romeo – or is it? – and a Volvo. They're big on mechanical rattle and hum, rather less interested in lane assist. We live in a secular world but these are cars as the good Lord surely intended.

They have credibility, too. Automobili Amos, resurrector of the Lancia Delta, is one of the prime movers in the restomod world. Main man Eugenio Amos is a race and rally driver, not to mention a serial car collector with the taste to match his financial firepower. Working with Milanese carrozzeria BorromeoDaSilva, Amos has, for want of a better description, done a Singer on the Delta using the OG Integrale as the donor. In excess of 1,000 components have been replaced, the pugnacious three door body is hand beaten from aluminium, with carbon fibre panels on the nose, bonnet and rear. It now weighs just 1,250kg, 90 fewer than before.

The car I picked up earlier in Milan is not one of the 20 Delta Futuristas Automobili Amos has delivered. It's the firm's original development vehicle that's done the hard yards, and is now doing some

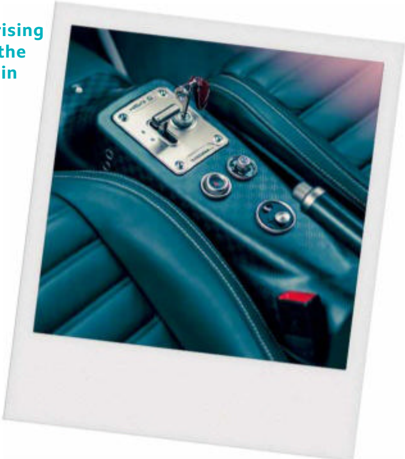
more en route to our location. There it will meet the Cyan Racing Volvo P1800 GT, the Totem GT and another 'make Lancia great again', the Kimera Evo37. It's like we've entered a parallel dimension, or fast forwarded through a time warp.

With some interesting results. Truthfully, the Delta wouldn't be my first choice of ride for a 150 mile blat up an Italian motorway after not much sleep. The original came along back in 1979 and despite Amos's evocative reimagining, the driving position and ergonomics are a defiant throwback. Plus, this particular car has surely seen better days. And yet, you immediately dial into it in a way that rarely if ever happens in a seamless modern. The steering and clutch are battling to see which is heaviest, while the engine idles lumpily at low speeds and redefines the concept of turbo lag the rest of the time. Needless to say, I absolutely love it. Amos reckons it's good for well north of 300bhp but doesn't say exactly how far north. Probably because it depends what sort of mood the car's in when it wakes up in the morning. I know how it feels.

By the time we arrive, I need a lie down and/or a stiff drink. And I've been teetotal for five years. Never mind that, what a place. The Gran Paradiso national park, in the southern part of the Valle d'Aosta, is where the cliffhanger conclusion of the original *Italian Job* was filmed. The SS460 wriggles north out of Turin and seems determined to get more breathtaking round every corner. Each of our four cars is compact enough to cope with this frantically ascending pasta loop of road. This will turn out to be a crucial attribute.

They might be similar philosophically but jumping between them reveals key differences. Following the tactile *marrone* Alcantara and woven mats of the Delta, the Cyan Racing Volvo is a study in Scandinavian minimalism. We've driven this exact car before, but in a different tune. Cyan, a successful race outfit, initially developed the P1800 in its own image. But that wasn't true to the car's more relaxed origin story, and didn't chime with potential buyers. Hence this GT, now with a cut down roll cage, retuned engine and suspension, more sound deadening and comfier seats. The main dials are crisply designed, the driving position still emphatically low slung, the interior ambience businesslike and expensive.

The Kimera is tricky to get into but once you're ensconced a joy to behold. It feels like a rally car, oddly enough – sparse, serious and a little dangerous even when static. The Totem is a superbly crafted GT. There's lots of exposed aluminium, leather and carbon fibre, big cowled Alfa style instrument dials, and a beautiful old school radio. In its attention to detail it reminds me of a Pagani, which is a tribute to its talented creator, former car designer Riccardo Quaggio. He modelled the design from a piece of Frigo foam that cost £200.



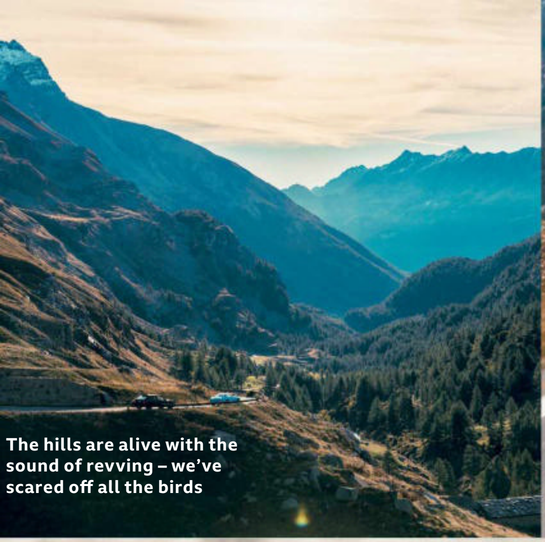
Totem is mesmerising inside and out... the chassis is a work in progress

"IT'S LIKE WE'VE ENTERED A PARALLEL DIMENSION"

It's just as well resolved outside, a note perfect, largely carbon fibre reboot of a 105 series Alfa Romeo, wider of stance and meaner looking but still the sort of pretty that only Italy delivers. Quaggio is a youthful character but steely enough to have built his business from scratch. He must also have noted that Alfaholics' deliriously good GTA-R has an order book that stretches well into the next decade.

We actually have two Totems here, one powered by a 592bhp dry sump 2.8-litre twin turbo V6, with the same gearbox used in the Ferrari 550 Maranello, the other with an 81kWh battery and e-motor good for 582bhp plus an integrated limited slip differential. We also have a problem: the owner of the petrol car will only let us passenger in it, though we can drive the electric one. Sadly, this is the wrong way round, not least because the EV's suspension setup is best described as 'experimental'. Nor can the rear wheels really handle 663lb ft of torque, as I discover when I leave a pair of thick liquorice lines all the way up the valley. There's a lot to admire here, but we can't be sure how good the Totem is until they've finished it – and even then there's the question of appropriateness. The EV is smooth and slippery of character, the ICE more charismatic even at idle. It sure sounds good with the V6 and even seems like acceptable value at around £445,000. Well, you'll never see another one.

The weather has turned nasty as I try the Cyan Racing car on for size. I've driven this car before, and remember it being pretty lively out of second gear corners. But that was near Silverstone, not on the mountain passes where Michael Caine famously said, "Hang on a minute, lads, I've got a great idea" as



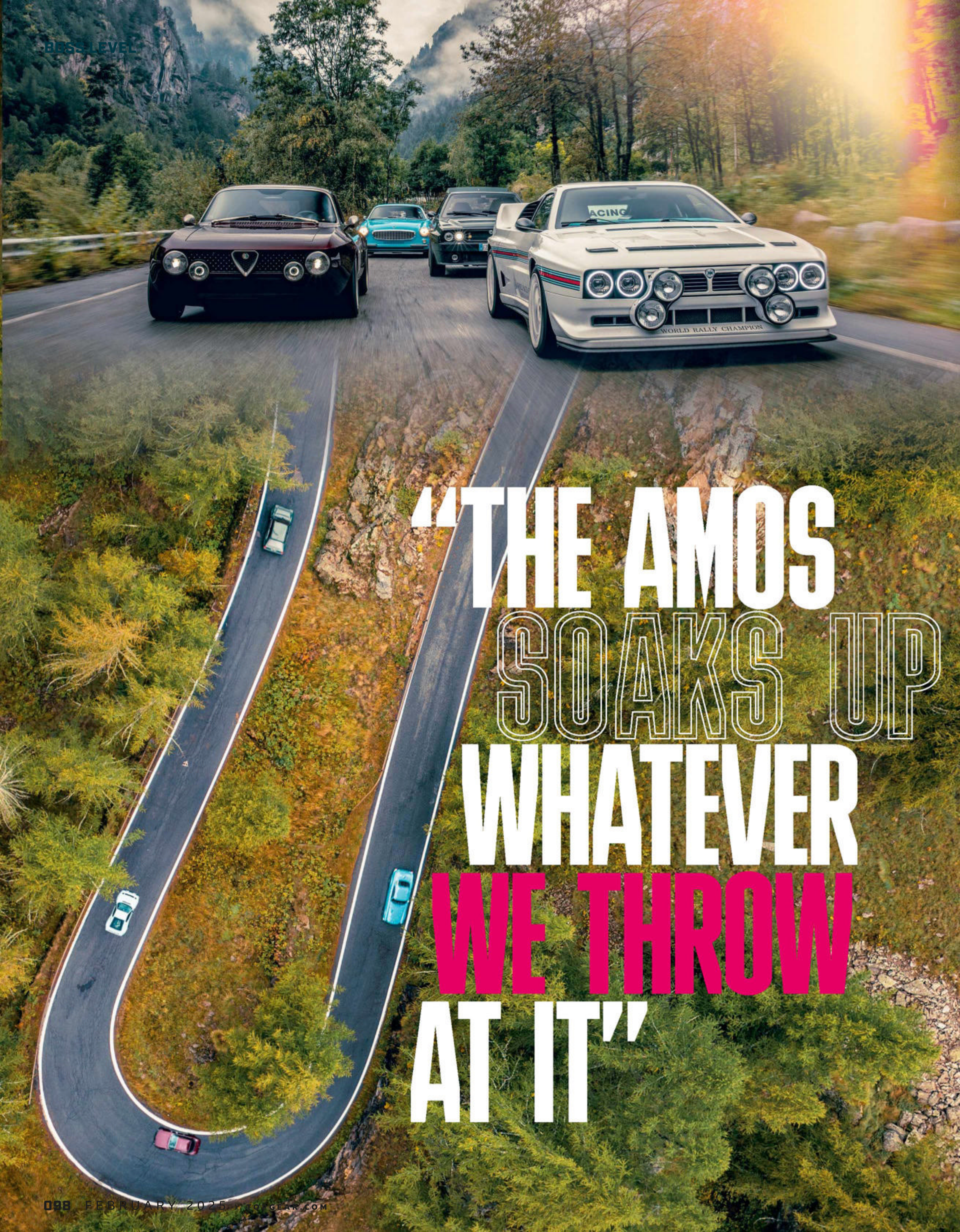
The hills are alive with the sound of revving – we've scared off all the birds

TO PROVA TEM 01

The Kimera harks back to the era of 'more is more', and we love it

WORLD RALLY CHAMPION

ARTINI RACING


WORLD RALLY CHAMPION

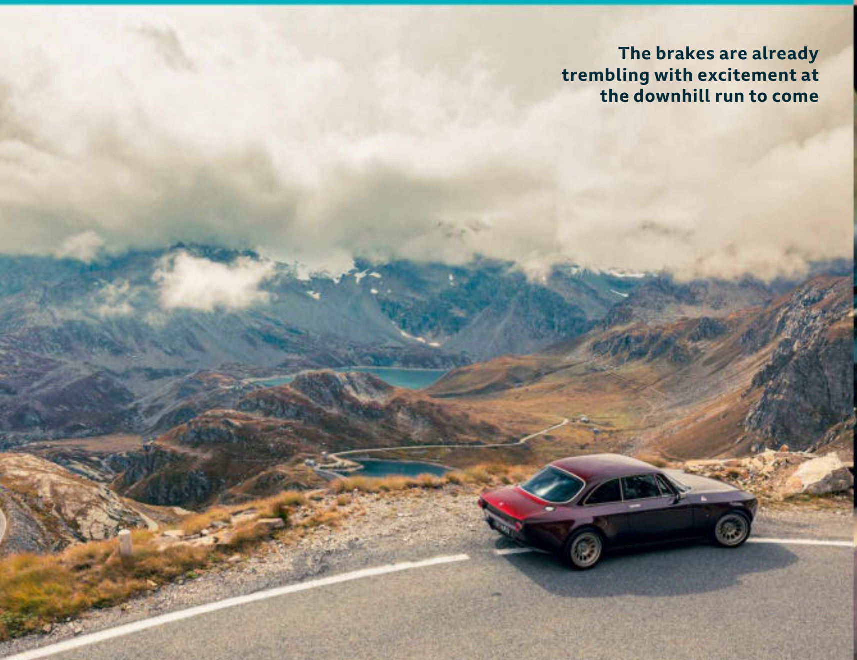
"THE AMOS SOAKS UP WHATEVER WE THROW AT IT"

MARTINI RACING
GK·833PK

'Chasing a Volvo up an Alpine pass' is not a phrase deployed often

These guys have been fighting all morning to find which one's the GOAT

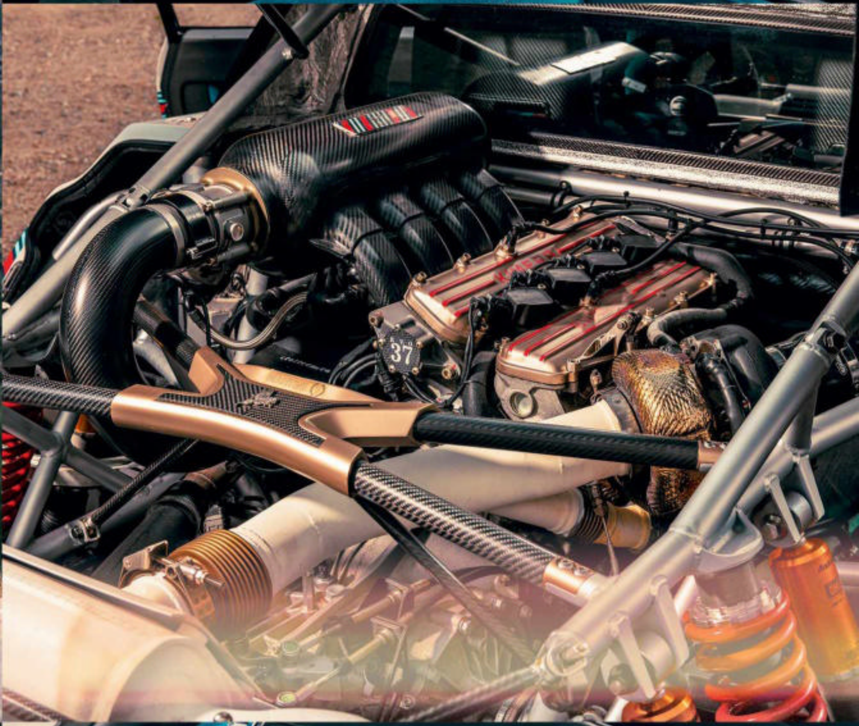
WORLD RALLY C



The brakes are already trembling with excitement at the downhill run to come

Fun fact: these headlights were designed using an early 1970s Spirograph kit

MARTINI RA
HAMPION



Elvis would have loved it in here

AUTOMOBILI AMOS INTEGRALE FUTURISTA

Price: £288,000 (plus donor car)
Powertrain: 2.0-litre 4cyl turbo, 330bhp, 243lb ft
Transmission: 5spd manual, 4WD
Performance: 0–62mph in c5.0secs, 143mph
Weight: 1,250kg

VOLVO P1800 CYAN GT

Price: £500k (approx)
Powertrain: 2.0-litre 4cyl turbo, 345bhp, 316lb ft
Transmission: 5spd manual, RWD
Performance: 0–62mph in 5.0secs, 170mph
Weight: 990kg

KIMERA Evo37

Price: £695,000
Powertrain: 2.1-litre 4cyl turbo and supercharged, 550bhp, 406lb ft
Transmission: 6spd manual, RWD
Performance: 0–62mph in 4.0secs (est), 190mph (est)
Weight: 1,000kg

TOTEM GT ELECTRIC

Price: £445,000
Powertrain: single electric motor, 582bhp, 663lb ft
Transmission: single speed, RWD
Performance: 0–62mph in 2.9secs, 130mph
Weight: 1,490kg

he dangled over a precipice. Easy does it, for the first 10 minutes anyway. The setup work Cyan has done since has made it impressively supple and light years away from any P1800 I've previously driven.

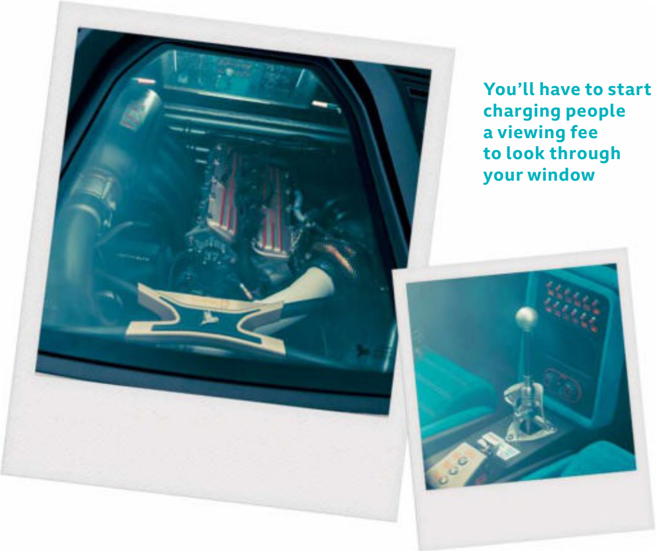
Volvo made about 45,000 between 1961 and 1973, and these guys can repurpose even the shoddiest example. Aside from assuming a donor car's identity, the only carry over parts are in the roof pillars, bonnet release mechanism, windscreen wipers and handbrake lever. So what we're looking at is a new car, engineered by a premier racing team, infused with the spirit of a charismatic old timer. The chassis is now made of high tensile steel, the body panels carbon fibre, and there's a roll cage inside for structural rigidity the original could only have dreamt of.

This is an exceptionally well made car, as it should be for circa £500k. The engine bay is meticulously finished, and houses Volvo's still current 2.0-litre four cylinder engine, turbocharged to produce between 350 and 414bhp, depending on preference, and redlined at 7,700rpm. As the car weighs just 990kg, this is more than enough to keep things entertaining, even if the engine itself sounds rather flat. It uses a five speed manual gearbox sourced from Australian specialist Holinger, and there's a limited slip diff. The box has a lovely, snickety action which manages to serve up old school vibes as long as you don't rush it. I'm less taken with the brakes, though.

Eugenio Amos hates understeer and his Integrale is the easiest of the four cars to lob from corner to corner. It's like a grenade, a proper party animal. Perhaps because this car has been well used already we're less worried about treating it deferentially and it seems to soak up whatever we throw at it. There are groans and squeaks galore, thrash, clatter and comical levels of wastegate chumpff. Part of the appeal of these restomods is the level of bespokery and curation involved. On which basis, I'm not sure I'd be comfortable ragging my own Futurista quite as vigorously, but at least we know it's up for it.

It's a thought that's even more present when you drive the Kimera. Kid gloves rather than driving ones are the order of the day. Much has happened since I first tried one of these a few years ago, founder and former rally driver Luca Betti having relocated the company to a magnificent villa in Piedmont. The ambition has grown to match the premises. You'll not get much change from £700k for one of these cars, which focuses the mind when you're attempting a three-point up a misty mountain. Maybe we should just park up and admire its shape. Is there a better view in motordom than the one across the upswept tail and rear three quarters of this thing? I think not.

The Kimera Evo37 uses a steel monocoque borrowed, like the original Group B 037, from a Beta Montecarlo, bolstered by a new tubular structure front and rear for improved rigidity. Suspension is forged double wishbones, with dual Öhlins dampers at the rear. Brembo supplies the brakes. The body panels are made of carbon fibre composite rather than Kevlar. The engine is a 2.1-litre four cylinder that uses the block from the original with new ancillaries, made by specialist Italtecnica. Like the mid 1980s Lancia Delta S4 Group B beast, it's turbo *and* supercharged, for optimum low end response and fearsome thrust at the top. Once the turbo's spinning, the supercharger decouples to minimise parasitic losses. This also allows for a certain flexibility: choose the wildest engine control map and 550bhp is available, which bodes well given a 1,000kg kerbweight.


You'll have to start charging people a viewing fee to look through your window

If it's a tribute act, it's one that ticks all the right boxes. Kimera enlisted double Lancia world rally champion Miki Biasion to help with chassis development, Fiat Group motorsport general Sergio Limone gave the project his blessing, while the engine bears the imprimatur of Italian engineering legend Claudio Lombardi. He ran Lancia's powertrain development back in the 1980s alongside team boss Cesare Fiorio, who he later followed to the Ferrari F1 team where he designed the Scuderia's last V12 engine.

Honestly, this is partly what you're buying if you've shelled out for one of the 37 Kimeras that have been made (plus an additional seven Martini liveried cars each celebrating a rally the car won). The 037 was the last rear drive car to win the WRC (in 1983), making it "in many ways the archetypal Italian car, a genius car but one that had certain problems", says Betti. The only problem I can find is that I don't own one. Up here in the hills it's tricky to stretch this Evo37, a customer car. But when we visit Villa Kimera a few days later, I get another go, on the long, sweeping roads around Cuneo, sunshine strafing the trees.

Even starting it is fun: twist the kill switch to 'on', pull the *inizione* toggle to prime the fuel system, then push two little buttons either side of the centre console. It doesn't start so much as erupt into life, the engine thrashing away behind you. Engage first and check out the exposed linkage as you do so. The gearbox is the same one used by the Audi R8 and Lamborghini Gallardo, a beautiful Graziano item. The Kimera is gnarly and grumpy at first. More competition car vibes. Get moving, though, and it soon floods your entire being with sensation, moves with precision and feels light yet exquisitely and deeply engineered. There's a definite sense of forced induction but the rush is linear and easy to stay on top of. It dances around but stays poised and perfectly controlled, a flyweight compared with most new cars, yet capable of delivering a true haymaker. It's electrifying to drive, in a way no electric car could ever be.

It is the most convincing here. Not just the best to drive but, crucially for a restomod, truest to its origins, taking the rallying 037 and not only reimagining it as a road car, but enhancing it. It is a clearly thought through, diligently executed and stupendously exciting car, a road going Group B tearaway for a new generation. There's more to come from Kimera, a company that seems set on a Singer style trajectory. And as a means of reconnecting to an imagined past, nobody does it better.

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BECAUSE THEY 'EM USED TO

HEADLINER

THE GREAT MALLE RALLY

The longest most tortuous motorcycle rally in the UK? Sounds like the perfect place to shake down our custom Royal Enfield

WORDS ROWAN HORNCASTLE **PHOTOGRAPHY** MAX HOWARD

“Those effing drunk Mongolians” is all I can think as I curse behind my rain splattered visor. Even its yellow tint can’t lift my mood as frigid water seeps through every gap and seam in my supposed waterproof layers. It could be worse. I could be my Ethiopian teammate, Ezra. After four days on the road eating nothing but beige and cake, he’s shivering atop a BMW R nineT while wearing a bin bag for boxers and bags for life as socks.

But it’s all part of the adventure. And this 2,000 mile, two wheeled tale and old school expedition of excitement, adversity, and appreciation for the open road starts two years earlier… with an idea.

See, *TopGear* has had plenty of projects in the past – from spannering together a Caterham in the office (to then realise it was too big to get out), to bearproofing a Mercedes estate that ended up in *Forza Horizon*, plus the odd space rocket and hovercraft in between. But it has never tackled the world of two wheels. Why? We’re not really sure.

So, over the past 12 months, with the help of Royal Enfield plus the awesome and eager bike community, we turned a bog stock Continental GT650 into a ‘never been done before’ crossover custom: a cafe racer with panniers and practicality. Because there’s more to custom bikes than parking on paddock stands. And to prove this theory, I decided to take ours on the longest motorcycle rally in Great Britain: the Great Malle Rally.

Rocking up to the start line at Lizard Point – the most southerly part of mainland Britain – I’m met by Robert Nightingale, the mesmeric ringleader of the 100-rider strong Kevlar clad travelling circus he’s created. A designer by trade, he and his cousin Jonny Cazzola were weaned on bikes. But wanting some stylish way of carrying their underpants and pencil cases on the back of their bikes around the world, they created Malle – a motorcycle luggage and adventure brand that has an eye on thoughtful design to match their vintage motorbikes, like the hilariously unreliable and ancient Vincent he’s brought along.

“I once had the fantastic opportunity to ride across Mongolia,” he says. “As we traversed the seemingly endless grasslands, we kept seeing flags on the horizon, and followed them to a long distance horse race. After a night in a yurt feasting on bulls’ testicles and vodka, I became obsessed with the idea of doing such a thing on a motorcycle.”

The Great Malle Rally was born. A six stage tour from the southern tip of our teeny island to its northern extremity through the greatest landscapes GB has to offer on the tiniest, windiest minor roads. Everyone rides in teams – “it creates connections, camaraderie, friendships and shared trauma like few other experiences” – and my random cabal sounds like a bad joke: a writer, an Ethiopian plant lover, an American coffee maker and an Irishman.

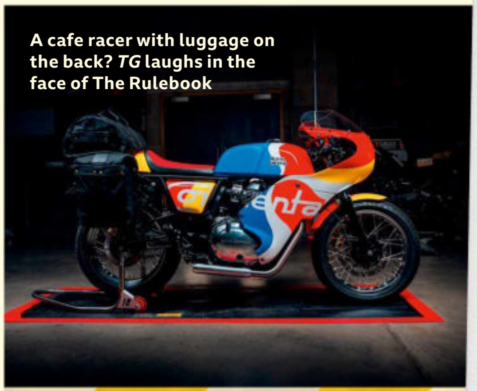
It’s not a race, rather a checkpoint time trial with the sole aim to get every man, woman and motorbike across the line. The world is here, with 21 nations represented and every kind of bike, from your generic tourers to customs, classics and choppers. *TG*’s cafe racer is one of the most inappropriate, uncomfortable and easy to spot painted in a livery inspired by Alexander Calder’s BMW 1975 3.0 CSL Le Mans car.

We all wobble away from Cornwall’s horrifically high hedgerowed narrow lanes. With an air cooled 650 parallel twin, the Conti GT650 doesn’t make huge amounts of power or torque, but that’s not really the point. In an era of potty numbers, its performance is perfectly adequate for all scenarios and means you actually use all of the revs, gears and lean angle at a sensible speed. It’s engaging and fun. But our modifications have made a huge difference.

By the time we hit Exmoor, the Nitron suspension loosens, offering comfort but control far superior to the stock option. But it should with 24 clicks of rebound, 16 clicks of high speed compression and 16 clicks of low. We push on and the skies widen as wild ponies look bemused by the conga line of leather and thrashing pistons that go through.

The incredible and often overlooked driving road through the Exe Valley and Dartmoor follows. We’re well under the speed limit, but it shows the enjoyment of making progress on a bike. On a motorcycle, you’re part of the landscape. You undulate across, breathe in and feel the environment, especially as the sun sets through Cheddar Gorge.

Everyone bunks up in bell tents. I room with two South Africans, one in a terrifying Joburg motorcycle club leather vest, the other named the less terrifying Salmon. “As in the fish,” he says deadpan. Both are lovely, and we exchange stories of the road over mugs of whisky each night. But they aren’t used to the climate. Neither am I, and we all freeze rigid in sleeping bags.

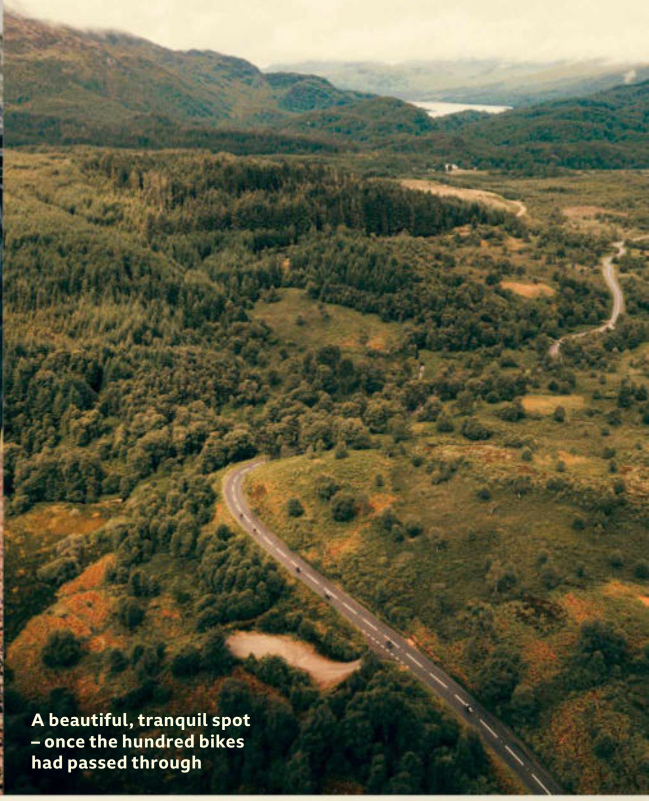


A cafe racer with luggage on the back? *TG* laughs in the face of The Rulebook

MALLE
GREAT MALLE MOUNTAIN RALLY 22

“WE’RE WELL UNDER THE SPEED LIMIT, BUT IT SHOWS THE ENJOYMENT OF BEING ON A BIKE”

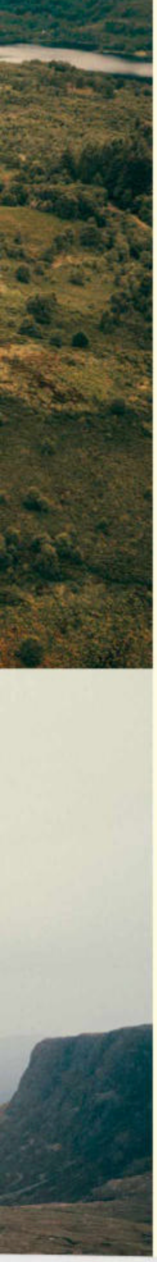
No cupholders on this bike, so Rowan's storing his drinks elsewhere



A beautiful, tranquil spot – once the hundred bikes had passed through

"THERE'S SOMETHING ALMOST PRIMAL ABOUT MOTORBIKING – IT'S CLEANSING, A MENTAL DETOX"

At a certain point you just crave a nice straight motorway…



Heading north, we will never warm up again, as the weather only gets increasingly worse.

The next day is Wales. All of it. Via the green and golden Brecon Beacons, on some of *TopGear*'s favourite roads around Crickhowell, up to Ffestiniog and around the mossy and vibrant Eryri. Three hundred miles of a cocked wrist with a tiny engine working so hard at one point it felt like it could turn into an IED and fire a cylinder head through my ringpiece. The final checkpoint is Hawarden Castle, a quiet, stony sentinel of history.

After the epicness of Wales comes the Peak District and, more importantly, the steep limestone cliffs of Winnats Pass. From this wild beauty, we descend into the double header of depression, Huddersfield and Halifax. This is when you contemplate if motorbiking seems a bit stupid. Lashing down with rain, we hit turgid traffic and a mightily depressing part of the UK where the air seems heavier and skies lower, as brick chimneys punctuate a landscape still haunted by the ghosts of industry.

The dreariness is lifted by hilarity as foreigners on the rally are bemused at lunch in a rock 'n' roll motorcycle caff where they're fed football sized 'barms' full of chips the size of house bricks. Luckily the Dales, with undulating hills and stone walls, focus you out of a carb coma.

I leave my team to ride with Robert and his sweeper marshals. All incredibly competent and confident riders, the pace increases and we all experience a journey you'd write a postcard home about. See, there's something almost primal about motorbiking – a magnetic, intoxicating blend of risk, physics, and visceral connection. It's cleansing, a mental detox, a way to scrub the noise of life out of your brain. Something Ducati Desert X rider Ben Bowers, two time testicular cancer survivor and Movember ambassador, takes seriously.

"A man dies by suicide every minute," he says later, leaning over a pint. "We're s**t at talking about our feelings. But on a bike, with your mates, on a journey like this, it gives us a chance to really check in with each other. To connect."

The next day, exhaustion rears its head. Crossing the Lake District's unforgiving Hardknott Pass – the UK's most punishing stretch of tarmac – Lynn, a spirited sexagenarian who's shipped her bike all the way from Vancouver, misjudges the 33 per cent gradient and plummets off the road. Fortunately, the pass is so knotted she ends up unhurt on the tarmac below. But then the rain arrives, and never leaves, soaking us to the bone as we head across the border into Scotland. Even the vape loving brides at Gretna Green look miserable on the happiest day of their lives.

We push on through the lowlands, and I curse the Mongolians for sparking Robert's idea in the first place. Arriving at the graffiti splattered Kelburn Castle with boots full of water, we huddle around anything that gives off warmth. News spreads that four people fell off their bikes that day, all getting away uninjured but still a sharp reminder of the realities of not having four wheels, bodywork and airbags around you.

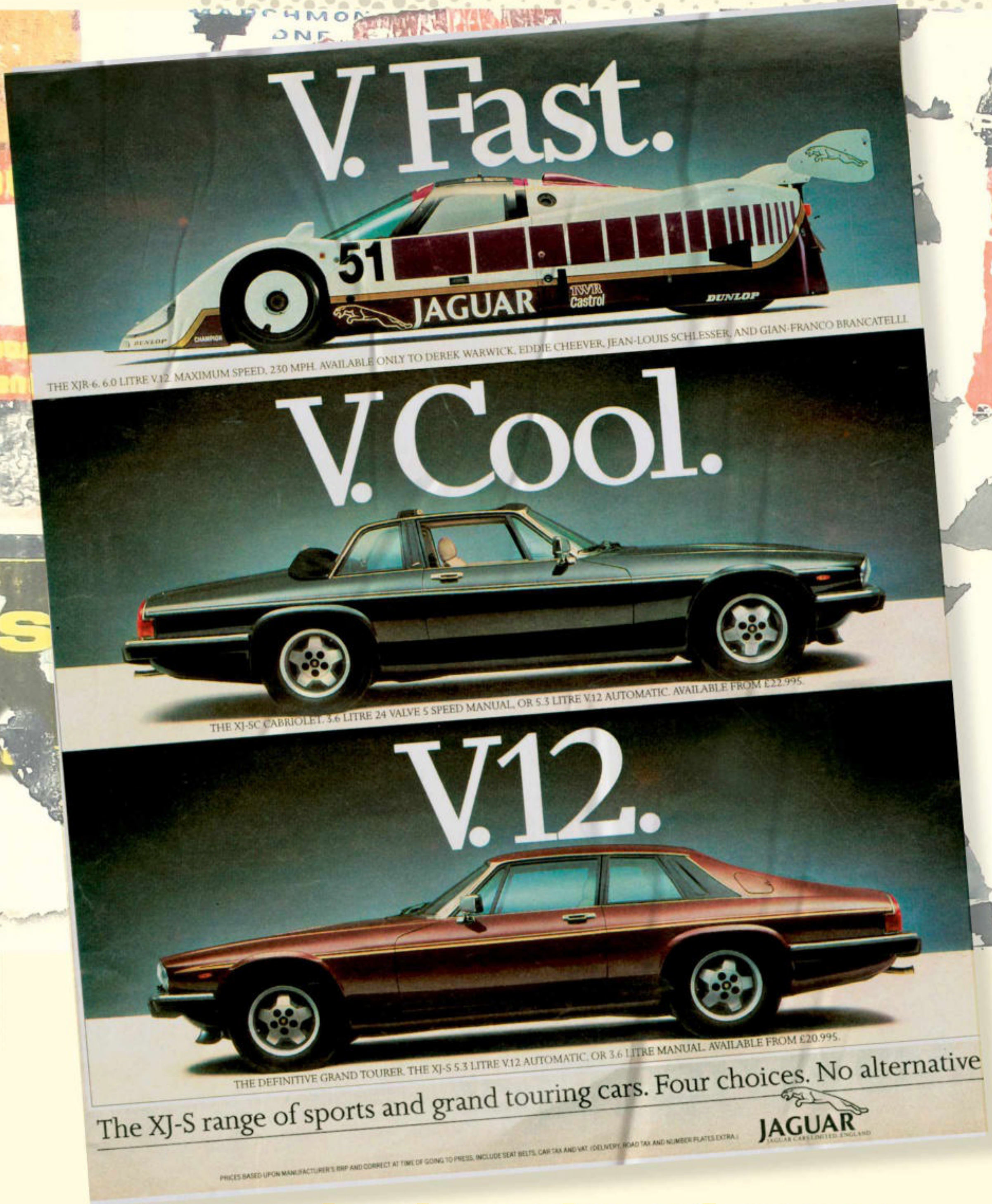
For the next two days, we conquer the Highlands, passing lochs, glens, and picking up the west coast and bucket list NC500 route. This plays into the Enfield's new, more aggressive geometry. With lower clip-ons and higher, more racy rear sets, I tuck in and lean on the tyre as the landscape unfurls to become more untamed to the point the road seems to disappear into infinity.

Over 2,000 miles and the toughest test is the gravel on the finish line

Having ridden the bike solidly for nearly a week, I'm finally at one with it and its shoddy steering lock. But I am also immensely thankful for Scotland based former sushi chef turned seat guru Tom Hurley. He saved my arse. Literally. Thanks to his completely custom gel filled seat. But being stuck behind the visor, with no one around and the sun out, life doesn't get better. You're not just riding through Scotland – you're riding through a wilderness so raw, so utterly remote, it's not just scenic, it's humbling.

The finish line. Perched at the very northern tip of Scotland in the grounds of the Castle of Mey. Every single rider crosses it... including Ezra and his bin bag boxers. As I turn my back, I hear a ring out of revs and his infectious laugh. After 2,000 miles without incident, he's undone by the king's shingle, losing the back end and dropping his bike, pebbledashing Charles' holiday home in the process. It couldn't have ended more perfectly.

Our Enfield – which began as a scribble in a boozy pub, evolved through late night, swear jar filling builds – has now, somehow, transformed into something resembling a friend. The Great Malle Rally is the sort of trip that strips you and your bike back to the core. It pushes you out of your comfort zone and reintroduces you to the absurd joy of human connection, the unfussy beauty of mechanics, and the unpolished grandeur of this island we call Great Britain. If you can, do it. Malle's motto is "prepare to get lost". Instead, we say, prepare to find yourself.



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V. Cool.

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THE DEFINITIVE GRAND TOURER. THE XJ-S 5.3 LITRE V.12 AUTOMATIC, OR 3.6 LITRE MANUAL. AVAILABLE FROM £20,995.

The XJ-S range of sports and grand touring cars. Four choices. No alternative.

JAGUAR
JAGUAR CARS LIMITED, ENGLAND

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Car ads that time forgot

JAGUAR, 1980s

You might have seen recently that Jaguar has unveiled its new brand look… and that its accompanying advert doesn't actually have any cars in it. Curious. One thing is true, whether you love it or hate it, everyone's talking about Jag again. Genius or disaster? Time will tell. But here's an ad from a time when Jag played on different characteristics. How different things were back in the 1980s…

IMAGES: ALAMY

THE BONE COLLECTORS

That time we...

WENT FOSSIL HUNTING IN MONGOLIA

I'll have to leave out the bizarre 'how it came about' tale, but the end result was photographer Richard Pardon and I pounding across the Gobi desert in an Infiniti QX80 in search of a Mongolian palaeontologist. Tricky, in a place that is vast, has no roads and unchanging landscape in every direction.

Once located, and given trowels and brushes, Badmaa Zorigt opened our eyes. Scattered across the surface are dinosaur bones, mainly ankylosaurus and protoceratops ("basically a Cretaceous sheep"). Using drones to help locate likely locations, we eventually wind up at the Flaming Cliffs, where we discover and then excavate a velociraptor skeleton – a rare find as the delicate bone structure is less likely to survive 75 million years of Earth's processes.

Once extracted and swaddled in plaster bandages my job was to transport it back to Ulaan Bataar – *TopGear's* reputation clearly hadn't made it as far as Mongolia. I get to do some amazing stuff in this job, but from start to finish this was a wild, wonderful story to do.

WORDS: OLLIE MARRIAGE

REMEMBERING
RETRO GAMING
THE CLASSICS

#63

Scud Race

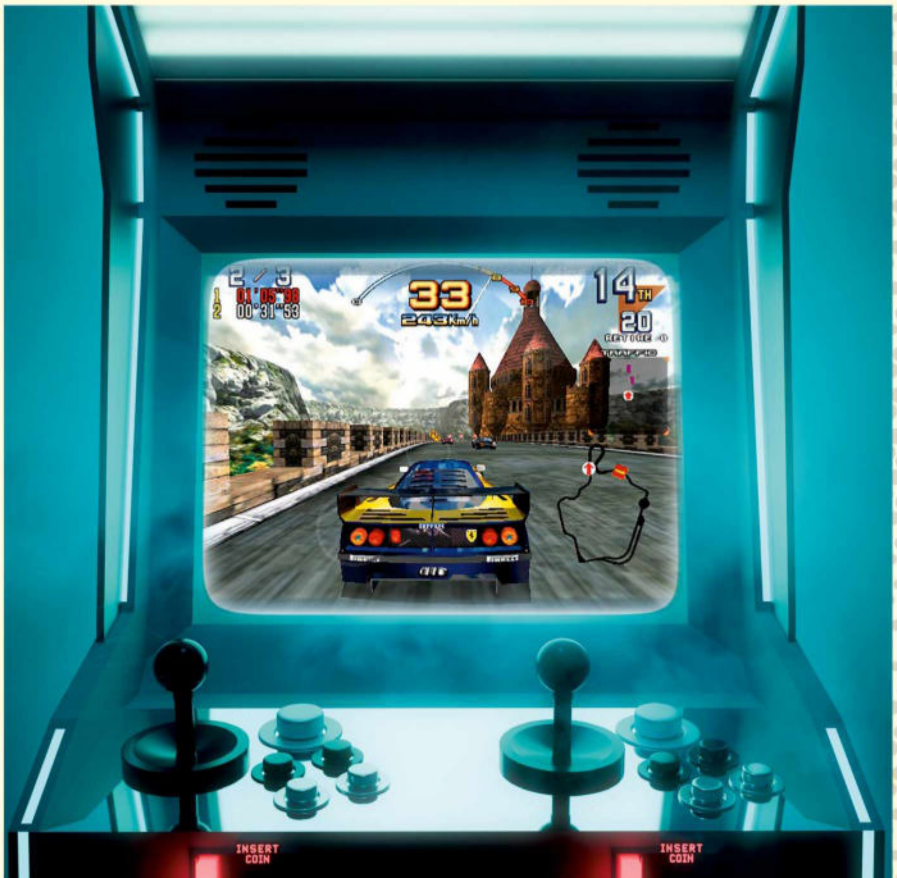
ARCADE, 1996

The problem with licensing a proper motorsport championship for a racing game, no matter how desirable the cars are, is that as part of the agreement you're usually also stuck with the circuits it races on. That includes all their tedious, real world concerns like spacious run-off areas, collision dampening tyre barriers and adequate bathroom facilities.

Sega's arcade racer *Scud Race* proved there was another way. While it featured the cars from the short-lived BPR Global GT Series, which included race versions of the McLaren F1 and Ferrari F40, it had precisely zero interest in recreating places like Silverstone and Monza. Instead *Scud Race* had you drifting through a towering Aztec temple and across the cobbled courtyards of a vast Germanic castle. If you'd ever fantasised about leaving big rubber tyre marks all over a UNESCO world heritage site, this was your opportunity.

You might reasonably be wondering what the title *Scud Race* actually means and the answer is that 'Scud' is an acronym that stands for the somewhat clumsy 'Sport Car Ultimate Drive'. Even Sega's American division wasn't convinced, though, politely requesting that the name be changed to *Sega Super GT* in the US to avoid unfortunate comparisons to the scud missiles that were, just a few years prior, blowing people to bits in the Gulf war.

Scud Race remains one of those lost arcade titles that was never ported to home systems. There was apparently a version in development for Sega's Dreamcast console, but for whatever reason it never materialised. And with the game a tangle of defunct licences and high end manufacturers, it's unlikely to ever appear again. Still, what we can do is learn from its legacy, which is why we expect to see a track set in a Bavarian mountaintop fortress in the next Formula One game... **MIKE CHANNELL**



IMAGES: GETTY

DO/~~DON'T~~ MEET YOUR HEROES

RENAULT CLIO V6

£27,125 (when new)

3.0 V6	252 bhp	0–62 mph 5.8 secs	24 mpg	1,400 kg

HERO Concept car looks, more usable than you expect, it's a six-cylinder Clio

ZERO Cabin doesn't match the exterior looks, poor driving position, pricey now

IT WAS INEVITABLE, REALLY. MY LOVE affair with the Renault Clio dates back to 2011, when I bought a 2005 1.2 16V 'Extreme' as a fresh faced 17-year-old after passing my driving test. Three years later, I'd somehow managed to scrape enough money together as a uni student to upgrade to a 2005 RenaultSport Clio 182 'Full Fat', a real pinch myself moment.

I cherished it for the next eight years, but sadly life eventually got in the way. In 2022 I decided, rather than it sitting unused, it was time to let it go to pastures new. I'm yet to replace it but I've often asked myself since then, what *next*? Well, logic would suggest...

Because it was with this car that my Clio obsession began. Its story started in the late 1990s with the Clio V6 Trophy, a one-make race series designed to promote the new Clio range. Then, at the 1998 Paris Motor Show, Renault revealed a roadgoing concept based on this very racecar, and the reaction was immense. So immense, in fact, that Renault turned to Tom Walkinshaw Racing to see if the thing could be built for real. And the Phase 1 was born.

It measured some 171mm wider and 38mm longer than the regular Clio, while it also had a 110mm wider track up front and 138mm at the rear, plus bespoke suspension and an entirely new rear structure. Inside the rear seats and boot were gone (sorry kids), replaced by a 3.0-litre V6 sending all 227bhp to the rear wheels. Some 1,631 were built between 2001 and 2002 but it quickly gained a reputation as being something of a scally on the road. Rumour has it, just under three quarters were spun backwards into hedges.

So Renault went back to the drawing board for the Phase 2, and while much of the development was again handled by TWR, the cars were fettled by RenaultSport too. While its refreshed look was in line with the facelifted Clio, the engine now produced an increased 252bhp, its chassis had been reworked and it got a 33mm longer wheelbase, 23mm wider front track, upgraded suspension and a stiffer subframe, all with the intention of making it even more outrageous to the naked eye but, more pertinently, a little more civilised to drive.

All of which weighs heavily on my mind given the particularly grim weather we've been treated to today. Here now, best get on with it. From the driver's seat the cabin is near identical

WORDS: PETER RAWLINS **PHOTOS:** LUC LACEY
WITH THANKS TO: SCOTT GLANDER AT SG MOTORSPORT

"I CAME AWAY SIMPLY RELIEVED I'D MANAGED TO KEEP IT FACING THE RIGHT WAY"

The stuff that dreams are made of... even more so when the roads aren't wet

to any Clio of its generation, complete with large steering wheel and absurdly high seating position, but turn the key and you're quickly reminded that all is not as it seems.

As I pull away, it initially takes some getting used to. The steering's heavy, the turning circle woeful, and I find myself constantly checking the mirrors on account of the swollen arches. But I'm surprised by how friendly it is. It's wonderfully analogue, the ride comfortable, the power delivery impressively smooth, the sound somewhat subdued. Don't let that fool you. As my confidence grows the revs build and the V6 soundtrack makes itself known.

Sure, it never fills me with confidence around fast corners despite the squat stance, struggling to shrug off its extra weight compared to my old 182 and not helped by the wet roads the day I had it. But this is a car best driven at eight-tenths, and I came away simply relieved I'd managed to keep it facing the right way.

"Fair play – from a 1.2 up to a V6, you've come a long way. Lucky git," my brother replied when I sent him a selection of the pictures you see on this page today. It might have taken me 13 years to get behind the wheel of one of these, but it was more than worth the wait.

DRIVEN

HEAD TO HEAD

MACAN TURBO vs X3 M50

Porsche has electrified the Macan. BMW has introduced a new, combustion only X3. But which is the better performance SUV?

WORDS GREG POTTS **PHOTOGRAPHY** MARK RICCIONI

My first piece of practical advice to anyone who is purchasing an EV is to avoid the fastest one. In fact, pick the slowest one. It'll be cheaper, more efficient, will go further on a single charge and might even be lighter too. Plus, it'll still beat most combustion cars in a traffic light drag race. Well, unless you're buying a Dacia Spring.

Anyway, for this test we decided to completely ignore that advice, bringing along an electric family SUV with well over 600bhp and a 0–62mph time of 3.3 seconds. Yep, it's the new Porsche Macan Electric in full fat Turbo form. And yes, like with the Taycan, Porsche is sticking with its old school naming convention despite the absence of any actual turbos.

The BMW X3 M50 xDrive does get a turbo. It also gets a 3.0-litre straight six petrol engine, an eight speed auto gearbox and a quad-exit exhaust. Yep, this is an electric versus internal combustion performance SUV shootout. So, which is better?

We should probably start with the Porsche and its mind bending numbers. Total outputs from the twin electric motors are 630bhp and 833lb ft of torque when deploying the Macan's launch control, meaning it's quicker to 62mph than a 911 GT3. In normal driving you only get 577bhp. The battery has a similarly hefty 95kWh of usable capacity, and when you're not deploying all of that power at once there's a claimed range of 367 miles. Handy 270kW rapid charging too. All of this also means a kerbweight of 2,405kg. Perhaps we should start reinforcing the roads now before the Cayenne goes electric too.

At just over two tonnes, the BMW isn't exactly featherweight. Total outputs are 393bhp and 428lb ft of torque, meaning it'll lag behind the Macan off the line with a 0–62mph time of 4.6 seconds. And yes, there is a bit of a price difference despite the BMW being delivered wearing £15,000 worth of optional extras, but this M50 is currently the range topping X3. At the time of writing the electric iX3 is off sale to prepare for the Neue Klasse reboot (see p66) and rumour has it there won't be a full fat X3 M Competition version of this fourth gen internal combustion car. So this is your lot for now, but we love an underdog.

Unfortunately, the new G45 X3 doesn't get off to the best start. Finished in bedpan beige and with its giant kidneys lit up it's hardly the most elegant looking thing. The boxy, estate-like rear end is probably its best feature, but from the front or side on it's a bit of a mess. There's just too much car, the surfaces are too flat and, as colleague Sam Philip points out, the wheelarches look like they've

WHAT ABOUT THESE?

AUDI Q6 E-TRON SPORT QUATTRO

Based on the same platform as the Macan but with a focus on waftiness, fastest Q6 e-tron gets 382bhp and is 1.3secs slower to 62mph than the X3

£68,145

POLESTAR 3 PERFORMANCE PACK

A little left field and a little bit luxe, but Polestar claims that its 3 "drives like a sports car". We disagree. Perf pack adds yet more bhp and trick suspension

£81,500

LOTUS ELETRE

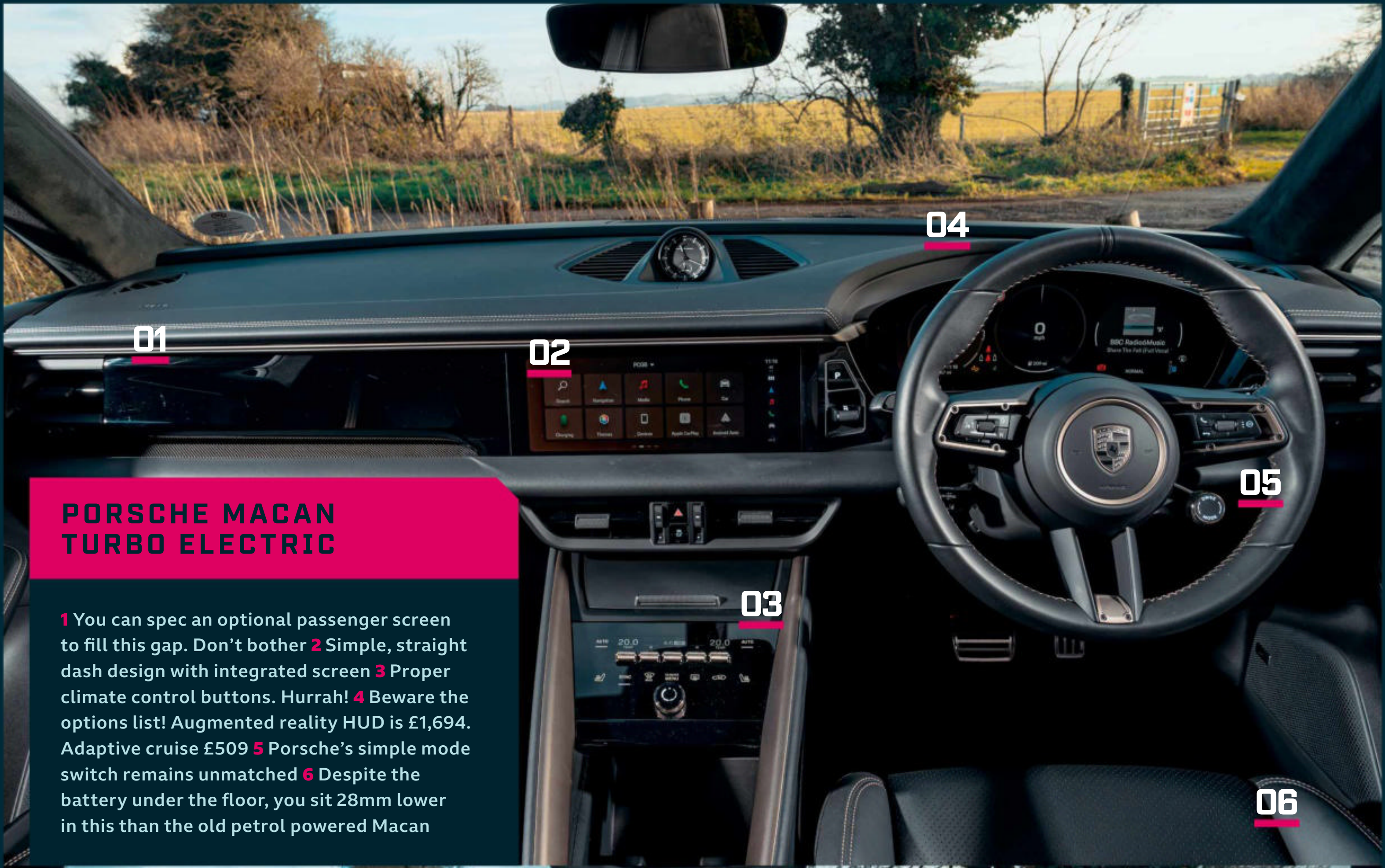
Quite a bit bigger than the Porsche, but the 603bhp entry level version costs less than the Macan Turbo. You'd probably already forgotten it existed

£89,500

Greg claims his tailgating was to get a better look at the adaptive rear spoiler

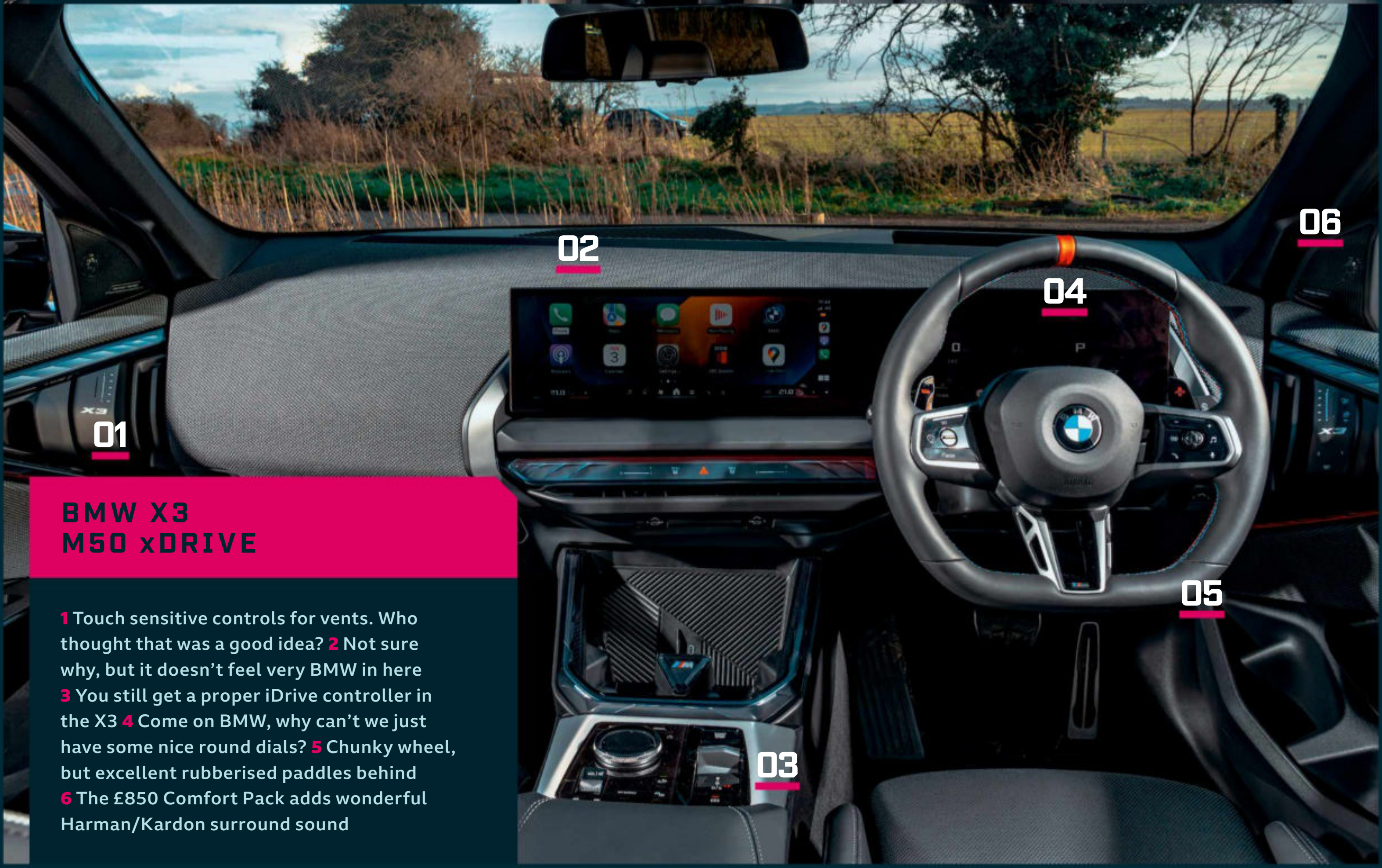
RE74 DYF
YE74 NKL

“FINISHED IN BEDPAN BEIGE, THE X3 IS HARDLY THE MOST ELEGANT LOOKING THING”



PORSCHE MACAN TURBO ELECTRIC

1 You can spec an optional passenger screen to fill this gap. Don't bother **2** Simple, straight dash design with integrated screen **3** Proper climate control buttons. Hurrah! **4** Beware the options list! Augmented reality HUD is £1,694. Adaptive cruise £509 **5** Porsche's simple mode switch remains unmatched **6** Despite the battery under the floor, you sit 28mm lower in this than the old petrol powered Macan



BMW X3 M50 xDRIVE

1 Touch sensitive controls for vents. Who thought that was a good idea? **2** Not sure why, but it doesn't feel very BMW in here **3** You still get a proper iDrive controller in the X3 **4** Come on BMW, why can't we just have some nice round dials? **5** Chunky wheel, but excellent rubberised paddles behind **6** The £850 Comfort Pack adds wonderful Harman/Kardon surround sound been whittled by cavemen. A good effort with primitive tools, but not quite a perfect curve.

Even with its split headlight setup up front the Macan is easier on the eye. At first glance it doesn't actually look too different to the previous generation, but Porsche assures us that not a single part has been carried over. The roofline is much more coupe-like than the BMW's, and while they may be similar in length and width, the Porsche is almost 40mm lower than the X3. That plastic front splitter looks like it'd be scratched on your first speed bump, but the Turbo does come with rising air suspension as standard. At the rear you get the classic Porsche light bar and you'll be able to spot a Turbo by the extra vents behind the rear wheels. That is if you've missed the Turbo badging on the back, of course.

This particular Macan also comes equipped with massive 22-inch RS Spyder Design wheels that'll set you back a slightly terrifying £2,741. Amazingly, they don't actually hinder the ride too much. There's a sporting edge to it sure, but the Porsche is actually slightly softer than the BMW on its 21-inch wheels with painted-on tyres. Both of these cars have adaptive suspension setups however, and even though you'd probably avoid their sportiest modes on potted UK roads, both are actually very well damped. Ride quality in performance SUVs has come a long way.

The first thing that hits you about the Macan isn't actually the straight line speed, it's the steering. The thin Alcantara clad wheel is immediately satisfying to hold and on the move the Macan turns in supremely sharply and responds to your inputs instantly. It's the driving position – nice and low in the car – and the steering feel that really allow this small electric SUV to feel like a Porsche. No mean feat when you remember it's built on the shared PPE platform that also underpins the Audi Q6 e-tron and A6 e-tron.

The Macan feels much smaller and easier to place on the road when driven back to back with the X3, despite its slightly bigger footprint and extra chub. This particular car gets Porsche's £1,445 rear wheel steer system, while the Bavarian is burdened by the usual overly thick BMW steering wheel, and you don't get the same feedback as you do from the Porsche. A switch to Sport mode adds a bit more artificial weight and an e-diff shuffles power between the rear wheels through bends, but the sportiest X3 still feels a bit numb and favours safe understeer.

The Porsche's air suspension keeps it remarkably flat through bends, but put your foot to the floor on the way out and the acceleration is so violent it might genuinely make you feel ill. This is a comically quick car. Overtakes are the work of less than a moment and even in Normal drive mode it'll pin you back into your seat. Sport and Sport Plus take things to another level. In fact, select the latter and use full throttle on a cold and damp day and it'll even get out of shape in a straight line as the traction control struggles to contain the power. The Turbo's rear motor is more powerful than the front so it's rear biased, and although it's fun I can't shake the feeling that it's almost too fast for its own good.

Still, switch on the Electric Sport Sound and this is a genuinely engaging EV to drive. And that's despite the fact it's a crossover and does without paddles to adjust regen or fake gearshifts à la Hyundai Ioniq 5 N. The BMW has real sound on its side from that straight six, but it's actually fairly muted inside the cabin and is enhanced with IconicSounds augmentation until you discover how to switch it off.

This B58 remains an excellent engine though. On a town and motorway run we saw 37mpg (vs a claimed 35.3mpg), there's a good glug of torque and the gearbox is slick, with large rubberised paddles when you want manual control. It may be

ITS ALL IN THE DETAILS

01
02
03
04
05
06

1 Standard sports seats in the Macan, but you can swap back to softer seats for no cost **2** Funky design is all well and good, but these doorhandles are hidden in the dark **3** Macan gets a charge port on each side **4** Some excellent BMW wheel options. We'd stick with smaller 20s **5** Electric Sport Sound actually not a gimmick **6** X3 wins the rear seat space battle. Heated bench too

SPECIFICATIONS

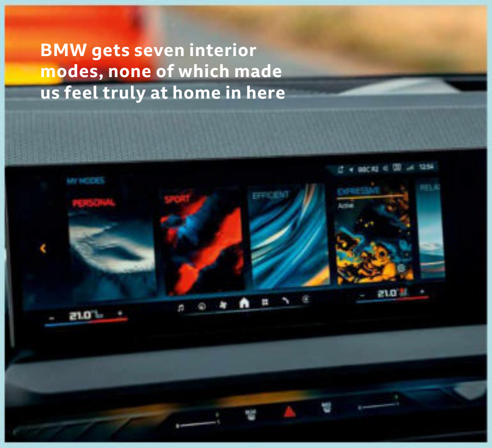
WINNER

	PORSCHE MACAN TURBO ELECTRIC	BMW X3 M50 xDRIVE	TESTER'S NOTES
PRICE	£96,900 OTR (£108,079 as tested)	£64,990 OTR (£79,939 as tested)	
POWERTRAIN	Twin electric motors	2,998cc 6cyl turbocharged petrol	*Base spec single motor Macan Electric starts at £68,500 and gets 355bhp, but this is a proper performance SUV test*
TRANSMISSION	Single speed, AWD	8spd auto, AWD	*Classic BMW 8spd auto. Macan gets a single ratio as opposed to two-speed box of the Taycan*
TOTAL POWER	630bhp	393bhp	*Completely bonkers power figure in the Porsche, although in normal driving it drops to 577bhp*
TOTAL TORQUE	833lb ft	428lb ft	*B58 straight six is used widely in BMW range. Upgraded here with increased turbo performance*
0-62mph	3.3secs	4.6secs	*Macan Turbo would beat a 911 GT3 to 62mph. The X3 stood no chance*
TOP SPEED	162mph	155mph	*None of your limited EV top speed here. The Macan Turbo needs to work on the autobahn*
BATTERY/RANGE ECONOMY/CO_2	95kWh/ 367 miles	35.3mpg/ 180g/km	*Our real world test saw the BMW beat its claimed mpg figure with some careful driving. Impressive*
WEIGHT	2,405kg	2,055kg	*Yikes. Macan Electric may be based on a posh new platform, but it certainly isn't light*
BOOTSPACE	480 litres	570 litres	*Bigger rear motor means less space in the Turbo than other Macans. Neat frunk, though*
VERDICT	*The pressure was on with Porsche electrifying its bestseller, but the Macan Electric is a success. In Turbo form it's bonkers quick, but also mightily expensive*	*Forgive the broken record, but the new G45 X3 is not a pretty car. We struggled with the interior too, although it's saved by a decent drive and that excellent straight six engine*	
SCORE	**8**	**7**	**/10**

upstaged by the Macan but there's proper pace here – it's just a shame that the internal combustion engined car is the one that's slightly lacking in drama. The BMW does at least have slightly better brake feel than the Porsche. The Macan has a very slight dead spot at the top of its pedal travel as it balances regen and friction braking, although once you do hit the discs it stops remarkably quickly. A few suicidal pheasants gave us that test. With the outside temperature just above 5°C we saw 2.9mpkWh on a town, country and motorway run in the Macan, which would mean a real world range of just over 275 miles.

And just as it feels like a proper Porsche to drive, the Macan also feels familiar inside. You get supremely comfortable sports seats, a curved 12.6-inch digital dashboard with clear, easy to understand dials and a 10.9-inch central infotainment screen that's super high quality. Not only does the screen look premium with impressive graphics and a background that matches the car's excellent exterior colour, but it also responds rapidly and loads swiftly. There's a bassy Bose surround sound system, plenty of storage in the centre console and separate buttons and rockers for the climate controls and on the steering wheel. A victory for common sense.

The BMW on the other hand loads almost all of its functionality into that giant Curved Display. Heck, even the air vents are controlled by touch sensitive panels on the doors. The first time I tried to reduce the quantity of air blowing at my face I was met with a distracted driver warning on the dash. Argh!


BMW gets seven interior modes, none of which made us feel truly at home in here

This X3's interior represents a huge departure from the previous generation, and while it looks dramatic it doesn't quite hit the spot. Perhaps it's because some of the materials now feel a little cheap, but it's almost as though the Mini interior design team was let loose on a BMW to see what it would come up with. I like the cloth covered dash, but the hidden doorhandles are impossible to find in the dark and while the dash is customisable it doesn't offer any simple, round dials. All of the climate controls are buried in that stuck on central screen too, although at least shortcuts for the temperature and heated/ventilated seats remain at the bottom at all times.

In the battle of the back seats, it's the BMW that comes out on top. The Porsche gets a surprising amount of headroom given its sloping roofline but without the optional panoramic roof it is a little dark back there and with a battery under the floor your passengers will sit with their knees raised. The wheelbase is 86mm longer than the old combustion Macan though, so there is more legroom than you might expect. The X3 with its glass roof offers loads of headroom, legroom and plenty of light for rear passengers. The BMW's bootspace is usefully bigger too, although the Porsche almost catches up if you include its 84-litre frunk space. Oh, and it may be worth pointing out here that if you go for the entry level Macan with its smaller rear motor, you get 540 litres of boot space before you even consider the frunk.

So yes, this Turbo probably isn't the Macan that I'd have, but in a straight fight between top of their trees performance SUVs it beats the X3 M50. The Porsche may not be quite as practical and it's a good chunk more expensive, but it's actually more engaging to drive, the interior is smarter and easier to operate and it's the more attractive car. Just remember to keep the sick bags on standby in the back.

“THE INTERNAL COMBUSTION ENGINED CAR IS THE ONE THAT'S SLIGHTLY LACKING IN DRAMA”

RE74 DYF
YE74 NKL

THE OVERRUN

Small but perfectly formed reviews. The best of this month's drives

SCAN HERE FOR FULL REVIEWS OF EVERY NEW CAR

BYD SEALION 7 EXCELLENCE AWD

£56,000 (approx)

91.3 kWh	530 bhp	4.3 secs	134 mph	314 miles

AWD ELECTRIC CROSSOVER-coupes are all around. Still, the Sealion 7 is bigger, roomier and more powerful than others at its price. BYD is improving its screen and interface fast, so the Sealion's is better than the Seal saloon's, if not yet as intuitive as rivals'. On winter tyres, the test car felt a little wandery but rode well. See topgear.com for a drive on UK spec tyres, and for the £10k cheaper 2WD version. **PH**

MERCEDES-AMG G63 MANGO EDITION

£203,595

4.0TT V8	577 bhp	4.4 secs	19.1 mpg	338 g/km

THIS IS A G63 LIKE NO OTHER before it. AMG has bequeathed it with ride control tech with linked active hydraulics (in your *face* anti-roll bars). The result? Genuine cornering ability. Really. Plus responsive steering, a hint of rear bias, and an anvil of V8 power for almost alarming acceleration. It smashes the stratosphere of absurdity. And now Merc will make you pay handsomely for it. **JH**

8/10

AUDI A5

£46,440

FOR It's an accomplished car, everything works well

AGAINST All the high tech means less fun driving

IT'S GETTING A BIT CONFUSING AT AUDI. THE OLD A4 IS THE NEW A5, and the new A4 will be an electric version we've not seen yet, on a different platform for electric stuff. The old A5 is just gone, but no one will notice. There's an A5 estate – great, we love those. And a saloon with swoopy coupe stylings – a "completely new sedan concept", says Audi – that's because it's got a hatchback opening. Very practical, we hope it catches on. There's a 2.0 petrol in two states of tune and a 2.0 diesel, all of them come with a 7spd DSG and get to 62mph in the mid-sevens. You can spice things up with the S5 and its 3.0-litre V6, but we wouldn't bother – go for the S3 instead, it's more committed. The A5 and S5 models are all relentlessly competent, full of interesting tech, they do a great job, they're just a bit… unexciting. **SB**

2.0T 4cyl	201 bhp	7.8 secs	40.1 mpg	159 g/km

8/10

MASERATI GRANCABRIO TROFEO

£169,585

3.0TT V6	542 bhp	3.5 secs	26.6 mpg	240 g/km

WHERE OTHER CONVERTIBLES strive to make a statement, the GranCabrio sits there oozing laidback charisma. Sitting there is important as when they've got going previous versions have wobbled like jelly on a plate. This time round that's vastly reduced. It handles tidily even if the V6 doesn't have the voice of the old V8. Also, the price has increased – too much given residuals have never been a strong point. **OM**

7/10

ABARTH 600e

£36,975

54 kWh	235 bhp	6.2 secs	124 mph	207 miles

WANT A HOT COMPACT E-SUV? The Abarth 600e will do the job for less than the Cupra Born VZ or VW ID.3 GTX. But we'd spend £5k on the 'Scorpionissima' launch edition – more power (278bhp), trick LSD, better brakes and lots of Alcantara. The artificial sound generator isn't as tragic as the 500e either, but for all the track focused goodies, we do wish it had a bit more power. **SA**

SCAN HERE FOR FULL REVIEWS OF EVERY NEW CAR

8/10

AUDI A6 AVANT eTRON PERFORMANCE

£64,300

FOR Refinement is excellent. Looks better than rivals

AGAINST No physical climate controls. Yet to drive with UK spec suspension

94.9 kWh	375 bhp	5.4 secs	130 mph	437 miles

THIS IS THE NEW ELECTRIC AUDI A6 E-TRON, and it's more slippery than a *Mario Kart* banana skin. Heck, this thing has a drag coefficient of 0.21 if you spec the Sportback version with the fancy cameras replacing the wing mirrors.

The long roofed Avant isn't quite that slick with a 0.24Cd, and BMW may have beaten Audi to the punch with the i5 Touring, but to our eyes the A6 e-tron is the better looking exec German wagon.

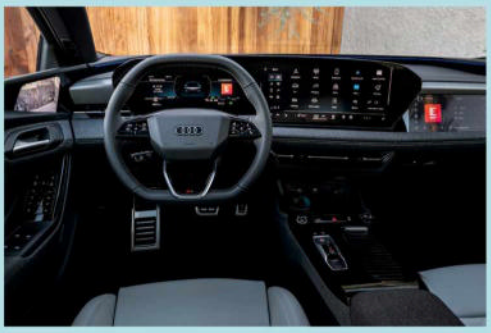
You get a flush, body colour grille up front with lots of little moustache motifs, surrounded by a 'black mask' designed to hide the larger main beam headlights, the front sensors and the inlets for the air curtain that guides air flow around the car in the most efficient manner possible. It's hugely aerodynamic without looking like a boring pebble. Take note, Mercedes.

The flush doorhandles and closed, flat floor both help with the aero obsession and there are active inlet shutters in the front grille that apparently allow for up to 7.4 miles more range. The optional camera mirrors could also get you 7.4 miles further down the road, but we still find them tricky to use.

Strangely, the 'Performance' powertrain here isn't actually the most powerful A6 e-tron – think of it as the long range version with a single motor powering the rear wheels with 375bhp and the bigger of the two battery options providing 437 miles of range for the Avant. Impressive numbers. It'll rapid charge at 270kW too.

Quick disclaimer, so far we've only driven it with adaptive air suspension that won't be an option in the UK. The roads we tested the A6 on were boring-Merc smooth too, but on first impressions the air suspension setup is really rather impressive. Go on Audi, give us the option. Even without air expect this to be a supremely refined car – wind and road noise are very well subdued.

Acceleration is predictably smooth and progressive, but the e-tron does feel weighty so it's not exactly rapid even in Dynamic mode. Of course, you've no gearing to worry about so the full 417lb ft of torque is available at all times and will aid overtaking, and you've got wheel mounted paddles to adjust the level of brake regen and engage the driver that little bit more. The brake pedal itself is firm and seems to blend regen and friction braking successfully, while the steering is direct if a little light on feel. Standard Audi Avant, then.



Inside you get many screens up front and a cramped rear seat. You sit a bit too high in the driver's seat, but EV estates are still in short supply so we'll just thank our lucky stars this isn't another SUV.

We're yet to fully experience the A6 e-tron in its proper UK spec or with its variety of motor/battery combos, but first impressions are very good. This is a handsome estate that doesn't try too hard to be an aero car and yet still slips through its surroundings to claim impressive range and efficiency figures. **GP**

VOLKSWAGEN GOLF R

£43,895

2.0T 4cyl	326 bhp	4.6 secs	33.0 mpg	193 g/km

GONE ARE THE DAYS WHEN A GOLF R SNUCK IN at under £30k and could be financed for £300pcm. With the 8.5 now at £44k, even with much improved infotainment and a smidge more power, there's not really enough of an update here to recommend the upgrade – especially when a used 7.5 is better looking, nigh on as quick and won't have you punching the dashboard every time you want the heated seats on. A fine all rounder, but a Civic Type R is a better drive and an Audi S3 a superior daily. **OK**

PEUGEOT e-5008 GT

£52,030

73 kWh	207 bhp	9.7 secs	105 mph	339 miles

SHOULDN'T BE THIS WEIRD TO BE ENTHUSED about a Peugeot, but the e-5008 does a lovely job. It's smart, practical, covers up the shared Stellantis kit better than anything from Vauxhall, Citroen and the rest, and this electric version still fits in seven seats. It doesn't really have any rivals at this price, apart from the Mercedes EQB. It's not particularly efficient, but then it is quite large. You forget, because it's done such a good job of disguising its bulk. A solid electric family car. **SB**

DACIA SPRING

£14,995

FOR Cheap, cheerful, ideal around town, outstandingly efficient

AGAINST Limited range, comical body control, not exactly refined

26.8 kWh	64 bhp	13.7 secs	78 mph	140 miles

YOU'VE SEEN THE DACIA SPRING ON THESE pages before, of course. But we've now driven it in the UK and have the full figures to go with it. The headline is the price: £14,995. That makes it the cheapest electric car you can buy. The Citroen Ami doesn't count, because that's technically classed as a quadricycle. Hand over a £2,325 deposit and the car is yours for four years at £169 a month.

That gets you into the base Spring Expression 45, with a 26.8kWh battery, 44bhp electric motor, 0–62mph time of 19.1 seconds, a top speed of 78mph and a range of 140 miles. You get 14in wheels, a 7in digital instrument cluster, electric front windows, manual aircon, cruise control and rear parking sensors. No infotainment display though, instead an app for your phone that operates the multimedia.

An extra grand, or £10 a month, gets you into the Expression 65, which has an uprated 64bhp motor for a welcome 0–62mph time of 13.7 seconds. Otherwise it's as you were – same sized battery, same top speed, same range.

Your final option is the Spring Extreme 65, which we were testing here. It gets the more powerful motor and starts from £16,995, or £189 per month over four years with a £2,763 deposit. But it also throws in some extra goodies including 15in wheels, a 10.1in central touchscreen with smartphone pairing, two USB ports, front and rear parking sensors plus rear parking camera, as well as a bidirectional charger that allows you to use the Spring as a power source for any external appliances.

Over here it provided no surprises to drive, pleasantly sprightly around town, slightly out of breath on the motorway. It bounces around and leans heavily through corners, but weighing under a tonne it feels refreshingly lightweight. And the real party piece is the energy consumption. Dacia claims 4.6mpkWh, we saw 5.2mpkWh on an inner city and motorway run on a cold autumnal day. That smashes pretty much every rival out the park.

A 20 to 100 per cent juice takes four hours on a 7kW charger, and taking advantage of off-peak home tariffs starting at under 10p per kWh, you're looking at around £2 for a full charge. Where I live, that's under half the price of a pint of beer. We'll drink to that. **PR**

GARAGE

INCLUDING

MINI COOPER S · CUPRA BORN · PEUGEOT 3008 · VOLKSWAGEN ID.7 · AUDI RS7 · RICCI'S GARAGE · BMW i5 · CITROEN eSPACETOURER · PROJECT CORNER: BMW E30 · FORD RANGER RAPTOR

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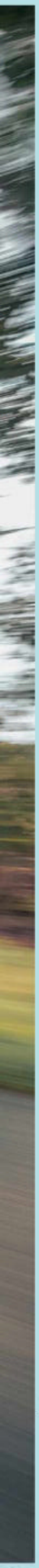


REPORT 5

MINI COOPER S

£26,700 OTR/£34,700 as tested/£376 pcm

WHY IT'S HERE:
This might be the last stand of the petrol hot hatch

DRIVER: *Ollie Kew*

THERE ARE MANY CHOICES WITH the new Mini. There's the 'looks identical but actually different' electric one. Not quite enough range for the round trips I do most regularly. There's also the entry level Cooper C. This, I suspected, is actually the best of the current Minis. Time to try it.

I'd hoped it would arrive not wearing JCW garb, because to my eyes the standard Cooper bodywork is actually cleaner, cooler and prettier, and also looks 'newer'. But nope, it was another 'Sport' trim, with exactly the same gratuitous diffuser and overwrought front grille.

As the photos prove, it was a miserable day when S met C. I nobly decided to shelter in the black car, and after spending a few minutes utterly failing to find any interior differences between the cars either, I went for a test drive. And thoroughly enjoyed it.

The C feels dramatically different to the S. It starts with a more eager 3cyl thrum than the 2.0-litre car's more onerous drone, and sounds far keener and less digitally augmented.

It's also noticeably lighter over the front end. Mini's official figures don't appear to suggest there's much in it, but even shaving 25kg off the nose in a small car is a very tidy saving and you feel that reduced inertia fizzing through the C. On a B-road, the C generates a lot less tyre squeal than a fervently driven S. It feels more composed, and yet more fun.

The C also puts its power down better. No torque steer causing the grotesquely thick steering wheel to try to waggle out of your overstretched hands. Mini claims the S is 1.1 seconds quicker from 0–62mph (7.7secs plays 6.6) thanks to an advantage of nearly 50bhp and developing more torque (221b ft vs 170lb ft) for a slightly longer rev band. Sounds like a lot.

But because the Cooper C doesn't waste any horses to wheelspin or exfoliating your palms with an overexcited steering wheel, it keeps up. It makes the Cooper S feel like it's trying too hard.

Looking like a home run for the Cooper C, then. It makes a more pleasant noise, it's palpably more fun to drive, and it's not so much slower that it would make me late everywhere. It looks exactly as punchy as the S, and then there are the savings.

A Cooper C Sport will cost you £31,050. And you'll want the Sport because it's the only way to have paddleshifters to override the occasionally daydreaming gearbox.

That's £4,400 less than a Cooper S Sport. Game, set and match. I'd take the C all day. One note of caution though: the C did 40mpg, and the S usually gets 44.

SPECS

POWERTRAIN: 1998cc turbo 4cyl, FWD
PERFORMANCE: 198bhp, 221lb ft, 0–62mph in 6.6secs, 150mph
KERBWEIGHT: 1,360kg
ECONOMY: 44.1mpg, 144g/km CO_2

MILES SO FAR 6,424 **OUR MPG** 38.2

Connecting Greg's iPhone to Apple CarPlay...
OFF
OFF

REPORT 2

CUPRA BORN

£44,625 OTR/£46,697 as tested/£442 pcm

WHY IT'S HERE: Can this livened up EV prove that electric hot hatches are worth a go?

DRIVER: *Greg Potts*

IT DIDN'T TAKE LONG. IT WAS JUST A FEW DAYS INTO running this Cupra Born VZ and I was about to begin the A303 and M3 slog from my parents' house back to London. Simple enough, but I always like to leave the nav on in the background just in case there are any accidents, particularly large traffic jams or awkward diversions. All are common on the A303 on a Sunday.

The infotainment screen loaded with its usual apathy, and on trying to connect my phone using the wireless Apple CarPlay I was initially presented with a black screen surrounded by the shortcuts up top and climate controls running along the bottom. No CarPlay in sight.

I disconnected my phone, got out of the car to switch it off, locked it and tried again. This time I was greeted with a message saying that my phone was connecting, so I set off in the hope that it was soon to sort itself out. Unfortunately it never did connect, and that message remained on the screen without budging.

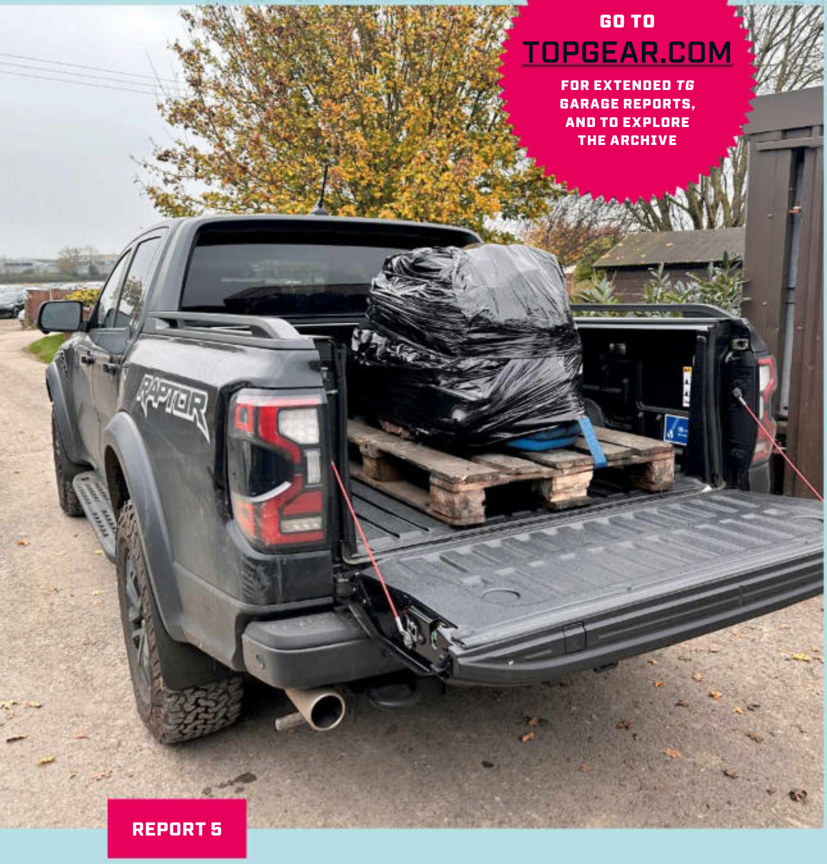
After much jabbing the central screen gained some sentience and decided it would perform a hard reset... while I was travelling at motorway speeds. Not ideal.

In better news, although the wireless phone mirroring has been patchy since then, the screen itself hasn't had any further existential crises.

SPECS

POWERTRAIN: Single electric motor, RWD, 79kWh battery
PERFORMANCE: 322bhp, 402lb ft, 0–62mph in 5.6secs, 124mph top speed
KERBWEIGHT: 1,999kg
ECONOMY: 4.1mpkWh, 366 miles

MILES SO FAR 974 **OUR MPKWH** 3.3



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REPORT 5

FORD RANGER RAPTOR

£62,479 OTR/£65,359 as tested/£785 pcm

WHY IT'S HERE:
Can a jump hungry, extreme pickup double as useful family transport?

DRIVER: *Jethro Bovingdon*

WELL, IT FINALLY HAPPENED. I used the mighty Raptor as a truck to do truck things. And it was such a success that I'm planning other things to make the most of its utility. Both the Raptor and I are walking a little taller, feeling more rugged.

The day started unremarkably enough. Grey, cold, light drizzle. Luckily the Raptor is a welcome sight on a winter's day. Climbing up into the driver's seat creates a sense of elevated invincibility. Plus, the heated seats are nuclear and the heated steering wheel works very well too.

The first leg of the journey was a simple 80 mile motorway schlep. Our destination was Litchfield, renowned tuner for Nissan GT-R and now Porsche, McLaren, BMW and anything else with four wheels. The Raptor's job was to bring home my old broken 3.4-litre engine, which had been cluttering up their storage area.

The Raptor accepted the pallet and forlorn flat six with room to spare and despite the clearly much lower ride height once loaded, the powertrain barely seemed to notice. In some ways the truck felt a little better, the ride quality more settled, creating an even more relaxing journey on the way home.

SPECS

POWERTRAIN: 2956cc twin-turbo V6 petrol, 4WD
PERFORMANCE: 289bhp, 362lb ft, 0–62mph in 7.9secs, 111mph
KERBWEIGHT: 2,454kg
ECONOMY: 20.5mpg, 315g/km CO_2

MILES SO FAR 5,186 **OUR MPG** 19.1

AUDI RS7

REPORT 4

AUDI RS7

£118,200/£122,250/£1,490

WHY IT'S HERE:
Why is our Audi RS7 Performance such a hit with the public?

DRIVER: *Rowan Horncastle*

IT IS OFFICIALLY QUATTRO season. The roads are covered in leafy mulch, the big gritter is throwing its salt around, and big ol' storms have whipped up mad winds, heavy rainfall, and snow – all in one go. Bizarrely, this carnage, combined with a winter cruise to Cornwall, helped me get on board with the RS7 Performance that little bit more.

The RS7 carved through it all with unflappable calm and without batting one of its funky LED lashes. Its adaptive air suspension soaked up the worst the road could offer while the quattro system distributed power effectively – providing swift progress and surefootedness.

The only issue I found was that the RS7 struggled with aquaplaning. You'd think 2,065kg of kerbweight would help, but the Continental SportContact 6 tyres really struggled to shift the water.

SPECS

POWERTRAIN: 3996cc TT V8, AWD
PERFORMANCE: 621bhp, 627lb ft, 0–62mph in 3.4secs, 174mph
KERBWEIGHT: 2,065kg
ECONOMY: 22.6mpg, 283g/km CO_2

MILES SO FAR 6,021 **OUR MPG** 21.4

Want to show people you've saved £10k by not having ceramics? Leave the 440mm steels in salty sea air

Audi's profile system is great for remembering shortcuts and seats. But it takes an age to swap between users

Audi's laser light, recognisable by the blue marker in the reflector, doubles the range of the high beams

The RS7's consumption is a tempestuous thing, but you can expect approximately 370 miles to a tank

HELLO

“We’ve gone for regular ‘M’ size, six-seat configuration”

CITROEN e-SPACETOURER

£54,375 OTR/£56,960 as tested/£469 pcm

WHY IT’S HERE:
Is a giant battery powered MPV really a good idea?
DRIVER: SAM PHILIP

ALL ABOARD THE BIG GREEN BUS! A Citroen e-SpaceTourer has wafted its battery powered way onto the *TopGear* fleet, and I am all sorts of here for it.

Yes, *TopGear* loves growly supercars and fizzy lightweights, but you know what else *TopGear* loves? Big, practical, get-the-job-done MPVs, and they don’t come much bigger or more practical than the e-SpaceTourer. At least, that’s the hope.

Sure, it’s based on Citroen’s Dispatch van, but I’ve never understood the snootiness towards van-based MPVs. Vans are great! They’re spacious! They’re functional! They seat you high enough to spy over people’s garden fences as you drive! What’s not to like about vans?

We’ve gone for a regular ‘M’ sized e-SpaceTourer, in six-seat configuration (a £740 option) and Max trim. This facelifted version also gets the option of a 75kWh battery – 50 per cent bigger than before – increasing official distance between recharges to 217 miles. We have very much opted for that £5,500 option.

But is even 75kWh enough? Will the e-SpaceTourer’s sheer size prove a bridge too far for electric, or will the e-van turn us into… e-van-gelists? Roll on the big green experiment…

SPECS

POWERTRAIN: single electric motor, 75kWh battery, FWD
PERFORMANCE: 134bhp, 221lb ft, 0–62mph in 13.1 secs, 81mph
KERBWEIGHT: 2,136kg
ECONOMY: 3.2mpkWh, 221 miles

MILES SO FAR 155 OUR MPKWH 2.2

REPORT 4

SKODA KODIAQ

£44,635/£47,960/£516

WHY IT’S HERE:
All the car your family will ever need – but will you want for more?
DRIVER: BEN PULMAN

THE KODIAQ HAS BEEN ON ITS best behaviour since having its electrical gremlins named and shamed, meaning we can move on to talking about the rest of the car…

Which we’re going to do with a little help from another Kodiaq. This one was blue, Race Blue to be exact, which meant it looked oh so much more appealing. But it didn’t have the optional £1,725 panoramic of ours, meaning the monochrome interior felt too drab and dark.

Having the non-PHEV setup was rather eye opening, too. I couldn’t get the mpg past the low 40s. Moreover, the Kodiaq feels like it’s been set up for having a big battery in the boot. The blue Kodiaq was floaty, and dived under braking, whereas with an extra 200+kg in the back, our big grey barge feels rather more sorted.

SPECS

POWERTRAIN: 1498cc 4cyl turbo petrol + e-motor, 25.7kWh battery, 6spd auto, FWD
PERFORMANCE: 201bhp, 258lb ft, 0–62mph in 8.4secs, 130mph
KERBWEIGHT: 1,977kg
ECONOMY: 565mpg, 11g/km CO_2

MILES SO FAR 4,307 OUR MPG 198.5

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HELLO

PEUGEOT 3008

£38,535 OTR/£39,135 as tested/£360 pcm

WHY IT'S HERE: Is the striking looking Peugeot 3008 a style-over-substance crossover?

DRIVER: ESTHER NEVE

FULL DISCLOSURE: IT WOULD BE fair to say that I find France and French things pretty wonderful.

Imagine, therefore, my unbounded joy when I was informed that the new 3008 you see above was coming my way. As none of you will remember, I was in the fortunate position of running a 3008 GT Line back in 2017, so I have previous here. Therefore I'm intrigued to see how this new 3008 has moved on from the version I remember so fondly.

Most noticeably, the third-gen 3008 has had a thorough makeover. It's got a striking new front end and the rest of the car's exterior has been gently smoothed and refined. First impressions? I like. The hatchy styling across the front looks kinda cool (oddly it reminds me of the warp effect from space films) and the minimal rear end looks like it'll be a doddle to clean – these things matter. Inside, it's a huge step forward. The wraparound 21in curved screen looks amazing and works brilliantly (it integrates both a driver display and an infotainment touchscreen) and the fabrics and materials all feel highly premium.

As it's only just arrived in my parking space, driving impressions will have to wait. But I am looking forward to seeing how this mild hybrid powertrain performs in towns and on motorway trips. And I have a few of those planned from the get-go.

SPECS

POWERTRAIN: 1199cc 3cyl, FWD
PERFORMANCE: 138bhp, 170lb ft, 0–62mph in 10.2secs, 125mph
KERBWEIGHT: 1,573kg
ECONOMY: 44.6mpg, 124g/km CO_2

MILES SO FAR 3,100 **OUR MPG** 45.9

REPORT 3

LR DEFENDER 130

£115,435 OTR/£117,375 as tested/£1,784 pcm

WHY IT'S HERE: Is the biggest Defender the best?

DRIVER: JACK RIX

THIS MONTH THE 130 ACHIEVED AN HONOUR FEW lifers ever get to experience... video crew chase car. I refer you to the photo above of a near three-tonne shipping container cornering on its doorhandles as it attempts to chase the McMurtry Spéirling through Hammerhead. Note the video rig suckered to the front bumper... and probably quite a few tilted shots of the Spéirling wanging into the distance, suckered to the track, in the *Stig Laps* film coming to YouTube very soon.

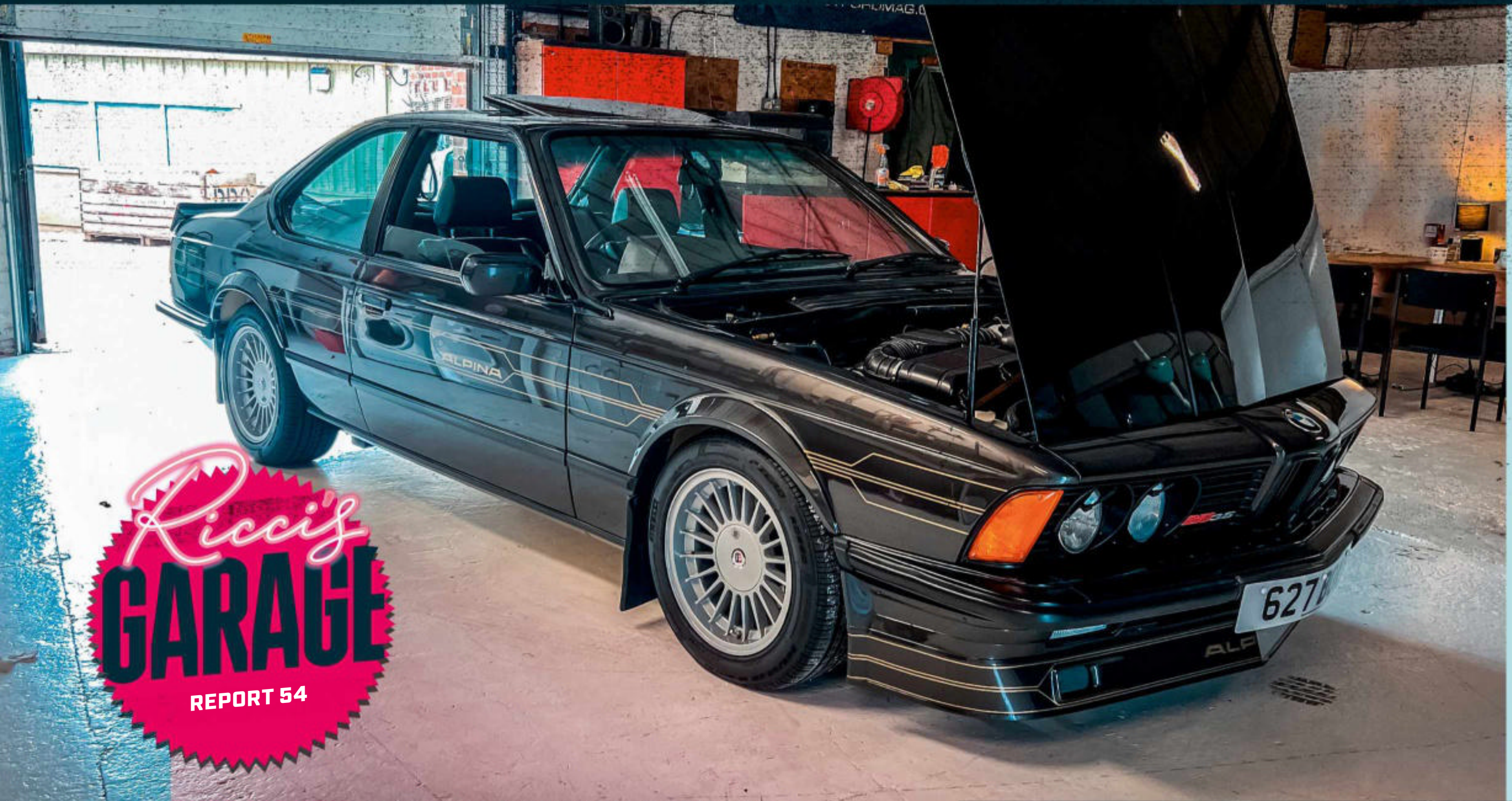
Clearly, the Defender got the nod for its meaty 493bhp supercharged V8 (which gave it half a chance of sticking with the McMurtry on the straights) not for its body control, which if we're honest isn't great. Length, weight and ride height – all things that the 130 has in spades to offer a commanding view ahead, supple ride and to conquer most things off road – are the enemies of dartlike reactions, as our little science experiment demonstrated.

However, the joy of driving something in a completely inappropriate manner will never be anything short of hilarious. Just keeping all four wheels on the airfield felt like a sizeable victory, and once you've wiped away the tears of laughter you do learn something new and valuable about the car – the 130 V8 is definitely a slow in, slightly less slow out kind of car.

SPECS

POWERTRAIN: 5,000cc supercharged V8, AWD
PERFORMANCE: 493bhp, 450lb ft, 0–62mph in 5.4secs, 149mph
KERBWEIGHT: 2,670kg
ECONOMY: 19.6mpg, 325g/km CO_2

MILES SO FAR 2,592 **OUR MPG** 19.5



Ricci's GARAGE

REPORT 54

THIS MONTH: MARK HAS BROKEN OPEN HIS PIGGY BANK AGAIN... FOR A B10 3.5 COUPE

For the past year, Steve Richardson (of SR Autobodies) has undertaken the largest restoration project I've ever had in the form of my Skyline R34 GT-R. But with restorations, there are times when the workload slows. Luckily Steve has found another way to ensure his invoices keep coming my way.

"Mark, you like E24 BMWs, don't you? Know anyone who might be interested in my dad's Alpina B10 3.5 Coupe?" I don't know Steve, who could possibly be interested in such a car? Could it be the customer you're calling who already owns nine vehicles in various states of disrepair, who also has no self control when it comes to a deal on another interesting car? Let me ask them and find out...

Firstly, a little backstory. We all know – and love – Alpina BMWs, especially those classics. Since the mid 1970s, Alpina has fettled with the E24 6-Series platform, initially with the B2 which was shortly followed by the B8 633 CSi and the now infamous B7 Turbo. This particular car you see here is badged a B10 3.5, a car produced for just two years (as the successor to the B9 3.5 Coupe) and made in super limited numbers. Just 44 B10 3.5 Coupes were produced during that time, and of those 44 just eight of them were official UK cars in right-hand drive.

Now that makes this B10 3.5 Coupe a rare Alpina even by Alpina's standards. But this one, because it's naturally affiliated with Steve, has got an extra edge to it. Because this particular car was the original BMW Sytner/Alpina UK demonstrator car back in the 1980s, and it was first purchased by Steve's dad a few years after its launch meaning it's been in his family for well over three decades. From bringing his sister back from the hospital as a newborn to transporting the four of them on family holidays every year, it's as much an heirloom to Steve and his family as it is a car.

And, to make it even more special, it's been treated to a complete nut and bolt restoration over the past few years by Steve's dad (as well as Steve's input at times). And funnily enough, Steve's dad is entirely as meticulous as he is, meaning every single component has either been refreshed, rebuilt or replaced with new/old stock along with having the car's authenticity confirmed from Sytner all those years back. Since its refresh, it's never been driven in the rain. The underside is cleaner than most people's kitchens. And for some terrifying reason, it's now mine to look after.

I'd love to give some profound reason for buying it, but the simple fact is that cars like this don't come up for sale very often. Steve's dad (understandably) wanted it to go to a decent home, but on the condition it would be used to create new memories with and not just sit in some collection gathering dust or being used for internet clout.

Those are the kinds of terms and conditions I can get on board with, but just in case that changes I have promised Steve he can buy it when the stress of owning something so nice drives me insane. Or, at the rate the GT-R work is spiralling, it'll end up being some kind of part payment for him to get the rest of the Skyline finished.

Renowned photographer Mark has been working with* TopGear *for many, many years. When not taking photos he's buying inappropriate cars. Here he shares his addiction with the world

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REPORT 2

VOLKSWAGEN ID.7

£51,550 OTR/£52,030 as tested/£478 pcm
WHY IT'S HERE: To discover if VW has actually mastered electrification
DRIVER: *JASON BARLOW*

I DROVE THE ID.7 TO JAGUAR'S HQ for a preview of the Type 00. I loved it, but it's a colossal gamble for Jaguar and also asks the question about what we expect a car to be and do as the electrification age gathers momentum.

VW's ID cars are grappling with similar questions in the context of an industry wide existential crisis. To range and infrastructural concerns we can add understandable angst about plummeting residuals. The ID.7 is the most premium and therefore most expensive ID, but it's also easily the best resolved. The user experience is almost entirely seamless in the manner we're so often promised but that rarely materialises. The ID.7 seems to specialise in reducing your heart rate, which in a large saloon is part of the job description. It's not slow and its handling is far from shabby, but as ever in an EV I'm far more interested in eking out the range than probing the outer edge of the dynamic 'envelope'. Sure, it's a bit sober inside, apart from some illuminated slashes in the door and dash trim. But it's very well put together and has a nicer feeling interior than, say, the Ford Explorer to which it's related.

SPECS

POWERTRAIN: single electric motor, 77kWh battery, RWD
PERFORMANCE: 282bhp, 402lb ft, 0-62mph in 6.5secs, 112mph
KERBWEIGHT: 2,172kg
ECONOMY: 4.7mpkWh, 383 miles

MILES SO FAR 2,610 **OUR MPKWH** 4.1

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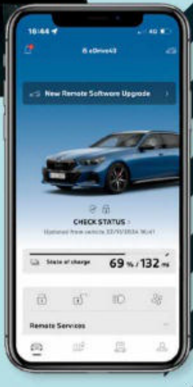
READY



REPORT 4

BMW i5 TOURING

£79,355 OTR/£93,395 as tested/£1,274 pcm
WHY IT'S HERE: Is an XXL dad wagon still a versatility king when it's electric?
DRIVER: *ANDY FRANKLIN*

WINTER HAS SET IN, AND ALL THOSE 4x4 DRIVERS are laughing in the face of RWD BMW drivers. Hang on, I've just remembered my wife drives a 4x4. Oops. You're not going to laugh at me are you darling?

I'll be honest: I've been nervous about the thought of having all that instant e-power under my right foot when it comes to the season of snow and ice. How would I live down becoming the cliched BMW driver seen scrabbling for grip in 'weather chaos' news reports? Although, snow, power, low grip, rear drive... you know what I'm thinking...

Luckily, the cold snap didn't flummox the i5 or have me front page of the local newspaper. Coming home one night with snow settling fast on the country lanes I feared the worst but to my surprise there was little drop in grip. And a surprising advantage of running an EV came to light in the use of 'B mode', increasing the brake regen when lifting off the accelerator.

Other advantages of running EVs in the winter? Well there's preconditioning to tell the car to warm up slowly for a scheduled departure time. No more deicing for me: that gives you back hours of your life in the mornings.

But there is an obvious downside to winter EV motoring. Range has tumbled from my usual 250 miles in these really brisk days to just 180–200 miles.

SPECS

POWERTRAIN: single electric motor, 81.2kWh battery, RWD
PERFORMANCE: 335bhp, 295lb ft, 0–62mph in 6.1secs, 120mph
KERBWEIGHT: 2,255kg
ECONOMY: 3.5mpkWh, 327 miles

MILES SO FAR 7,883 **OUR MPKWH** 3.1

REPORT 3

“There’s actually tonnes thrown in to this spec”

VAUXHALL ASTRA SPORTS TOURER GSE

£44,000 OTR/£44,500 as tested/£374 pcm

WHY IT’S HERE: The VXR badge is dead, now we’ve got GSE. What’s it all about?

DRIVER: VIJAY PATTNI

THE CHEAPEST ASTRA ESTATE – sorry, *Sports Tourer* – Vauxhall will sell you is the base, entry level ‘Design’ trim.

It comes with a lowly 1.2-litre turbocharged three-cylinder petrol engine producing a heady 109bhp, six-speed manual gearbox and costs just £28,170.

A lot of car – literally, because it’s got a big footprint – for the money, though keen horsepower enthusiasts might want to sling in an additional £600 to upgrade to the 128bhp Design trim version.

Really keen horsepower enthusiasts might prefer the range topping ‘GSE’ Sports Tourer *TopGear* is currently running. This car swings in with 223bhp, for the rather healthier sum of… £44,000.

Now obviously, very few people actually go in and dump forty three large on a dealer’s desk and ask for the keys, but you’re looking at £317 per month for the Design… or £374 per month for the GSE.

For that, you get a 1.6-litre turbocharged four-cylinder petrol engine, a 12.4kWh battery, and an 8spd auto gearbox. On top of this beefier drivetrain comes the fancy Koni dampers, matched to 10mm lower springs. It certainly gives the Astra a proper sporty stance.

There’s actually tonnes thrown into this spec, as you’d imagine. A wireless charging pad, a panoramic sunroof, an electrically powered boot, USB connections, a great head-up display, a great central display, and a 360° HD camera.

The Astra Design trim gets cupholders, some parking sensors, that central screen and a USB port, but not much else besides. So for 57 quid extra a month, the GSE looks like… pretty good value, actually.

SPECS

POWERTRAIN: 1598cc 4cyl turbo + e-motor, 12.4kWh battery, 6spd auto, FWD
PERFORMANCE: 223bhp, 265lb ft, 0–62mph in 7.5secs, 146mph
KERBWEIGHT: 1,746kg
ECONOMY: 256mpg, 25g/km CO_2

MILES SO FAR: 6,463 **OUR MPG:** 43.4

QUALITY CONTROL

LOVED AND LOST

CARS WE ONCE OWNED THAT STOLE OUR HEARTS FOREVER

VOLKSWAGEN SCIROCCO

WRITTEN BY: OLLIE MARRIAGE

Dear Rusty

You deserved more. Mainly you deserved a solvent owner, not a 17 year old who had to make sure the pump clicked off at £2.80 or he'd have gone overdrawn. Repairs, I'm so sorry to say were entirely uneconomical. How you nursed yourself through the MOT was a mystery to me, given the rust situation.

It was everywhere by the time you became mine, already 13 years and 84,000 miles old. Your front wings and sills were heavily perforated, and the dried mud that had built up in your wheelarches was, as I discovered on the fateful day I hosed them out, largely structural.

But I loved you. You were the envy of all my 2CV, Maxi and Nova-driving mates. The fastest of the pack with your 110bhp GLi engine. I'm so sorry about the oak tree incident - chalk it up as an early lesson in understeer. I always knew you'd stop three inches from its unforgiving trunk, even if my yelping passengers didn't.

WHAT ELSE WE'RE RUNNING

REPORT 5

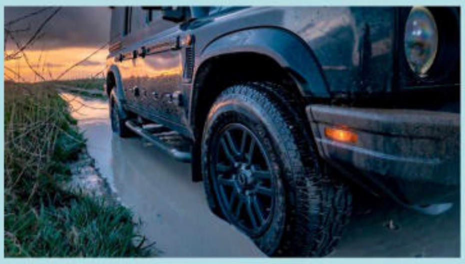
TESLA MODEL 3

Welcome to the electric economy. A surveyor recommended my rooftop solar panels need more weighing down against the wind. So it's off to the builders' merchant in the electric car to buy some blocks. Sadly, because I have no offstreet parking, the car isn't actually charged by the panels. PH

REPORT 4

GENESIS GV60

I was having a scoot around some of the offers from Genesis. You can get a GV60 for 1.9 per cent APR on PCP. That would mean a monthly payment of £386.75, with interest charges on a £54,845 car of £2,079.54. But you also need a £15,000 deposit, and you only get 6,000 miles on the books. Do your research, people. TF



REPORT 6

INEOS GRENADIER

Spec advice for potential buyers: get the locking diff equipped Trialmaster on BF Goodrich tyres (£800 option). Add a winch. Lean in to its off-road ability, because that is the Grenadier's superpower (see p72). The Fieldmaster is great off-road, the Trialmaster is unstoppable. On road? They're equally pants. OM

www.master-fix.com
020 7518 8600
GB J786 CUU

PROJECT CORNER

Dreams do come true! You just need to wait a few years & leave a note

THE POTTS REPORT

WHAT IS IT? 1991 BMW E30 Design Edition in neon green 1/50
WRITER: *Katie Potts*

MEET MY BMW E30 DESIGN Edition in stunning neon green. After admiring this car for years walking past it on my way to work every day, it finally became mine. The love for this car began two years ago and you'd often see me taking photos and posting about it on social media. But it was that one day I took a chance, and I left a note on the back of an old parking fine asking if the owner was willing to ever sell it and telling them just how much I adored it.

To my delight, I received a text message a few days later from the owner, we spoke on the phone briefly but he was unfortunately unwell and in hospital. We kept in contact and he'd actually already seen me in the area multiple times drooling over it (oops). Time went by waiting to finally meet him and see the car in person, until the news broke that he had sadly passed away and I received a message from his wife. We met up and she told me how much he spoke about me. We came to an agreement and I've now taken on his pride and joy and made it mine. "It was supposed to be yours and you will love it like we did." I hope I can live up to that high bar.

Hey!
I used to walk past
everyday and
it I see it doesn't
AUTOMOTIVE PHOTO
kt.cars
contact@ktcars.co.uk
kpmedia.info
30

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TOP FIVES FOR JUST ABOUT EVERYTHING

THE HOT LIST

CITY CARS

TG TIP
The £17k 3 trim has best blend of price and tech with heated seats and wireless phone charging

1

KIA PICANTO

PRICE: £15,595–£19,145

Fizzy, frugal and fun to drive, the tiny Picanto has been refined over three generations since 2003. The latest model got a welcome style injection when it was facelifted in 2023. There are surprisingly generous kit levels on offer, too

Aimed at: canny pensioners, new drivers

OR YOU COULD HAVE ONE OF THESE...

2

HYUNDAI i10

PRICE: £16,030–£18,630

This tiny hatchback feels very grown up from behind the wheel, and the i10 is an eminently sensible city car choice with a strong spec. Great on holiday, too

Aimed at: car rental agencies

3

FIAT 500e

PRICE: £24,995–£33,995

One of the original retro tribute acts has matured into an EV while holding to its roots. Back's cramped, but there's still room for soft toys on the parcel shelf

Aimed at: retro hungry millennials

4

TOYOTA AYGO X

PRICE: £16,140–£20,165

What do you get if you cross a city car and an SUV? The Aygo X, apparently – much cooler than the old Aygo, but that X is only worth 11mm of ride height

Aimed at: the kids

5

CITROEN AMI

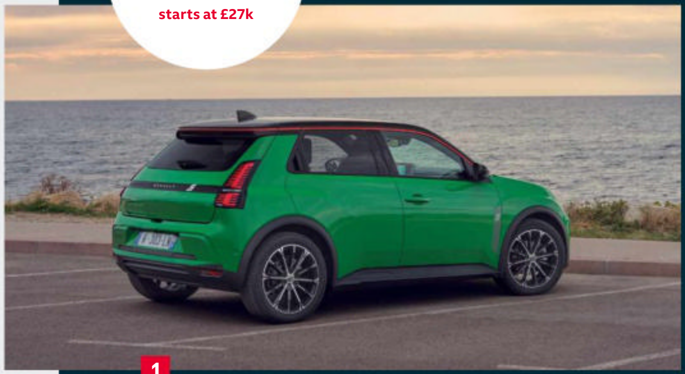
PRICE: £7,695–£8,595

Unlike the other cars here, the Ami really is just for the city, with a range of up to 46 miles and a top speed of 30mph. Still, quicker than getting the bus

Aimed at: antisocial commuters

SUPERMINIS

TG TIP
Techno trim with the 52kWh battery is the best all-rounder and starts at £27k



1

RENAULT 5

PRICE: £22,995–£28,995

There's a delicate line to tread with a retro modern take on a stone cold classic, but Renault has managed it well with its new 5. Nods to the past abound, but that doesn't stop the supermini from being a great all round small electric car

Aimed at: retrospectives

OR YOU COULD HAVE ONE OF THESE...

2

SUZUKI SWIFT

PRICE: £19,199–£21,549

Latest version of the Swift shows that cheap can still leave you feeling cheerful, especially with low monthly costs and the right kit levels

Aimed at: bargain hunters

3

RENAULT CLIO

PRICE: £18,395–£24,895

The hybrid version works out a bit expensive, but the Clio is as solid a buy as it ever was – a proven package with a bit of added French flair

Aimed at: Nicole, papa, *toute la famille*

4

MINI COOPER

PRICE: £23,150–£39,000

New Mini takes the car on in all the right ways, with a sharp exterior design and tech-focused interior that's fun but still useful. Ride's a bit firm, though

Aimed at: young professionals/estate agents

5

SKODA FABIA

PRICE: £19,880–£25,870

No electric whizzery here, just a great all-rounder with a solid 1.0-litre 3cyl petrol engine and some nifty interior touches (like the door umbrella)

Aimed at: sensible folks

FAMILY HATCHBACKS

1

HONDA CIVIC

PRICE: £35,005–£39,805

The strange thing about the Honda Civic is how wildly it veers from one generation to the next – you get a crazy one, then a sensible one, a crazy one... This current version is the sensible one, but that's not a bad thing – it might be conservative on the outside, but the interior is simply put together and to a high standard. You won't mind long family journeys, and you know that it'll all last for miles and miles. There's a strangely complex hybrid setup under the bonnet, but you needn't worry about all that, because the upshot is that the car drives and handles well enough, but won't cost you the earth in petrol bills. See, sometimes it does pay to be a little sensible. Though if you do want the Civic to be a bit crazy you can always go for the Type R version, which delivers in spades

Aimed at: spreadsheet users

TG TIP

Hybrid only, and stick to entry level **Elegance** trim for decent kit and best economy

OR YOU COULD HAVE ONE OF THESE...

2

SKODA OCTAVIA

PRICE: £26,775–£39,775

There must be a few noses out of joint in the darkest corporate depths of the VW Group – of the host of cars based on the MkVIII Golf, the Skoda's the best

Aimed at: people with sensible shoes

3

VOLKSWAGEN GOLF

PRICE: £27,760–£45,785

Long the benchmark in this sector, the crown has slipped a little in this eighth generation guise. We wouldn't count the Golf out for long though

Aimed at: everyone

4

MG4

PRICE: £26,995–£36,495

Popped up out of nowhere to become one of the easiest to recommend electric family hatchbacks around. Even looks good in orange

Aimed at: early adopters/taxi drivers

5

RENAULT MEGANE E-TECH

PRICE: £33,995–£37,995

The strange thing about the latest Megane is that it doesn't excel anywhere, but overall adds up to a great family car that happens to be electric too

Aimed at: stylish school runs

BEST EV EXPERIENCE

TESLA MODEL 3

PRICE: from £39,990

Now, the Model 3 isn't the best EV on sale – it doesn't enjoy the advantage it once had as those pesky 'legacy' carmakers pull their fingers out and 'new' Chinese brands muscle in. But for overall EV experience? Very tough to beat that Supercharger network...

Aimed at: broskis

HOT HATCHES

TG TIP
Don't be tempted by the £3.8k **Carbon Pack**, it's expensive enough as it is...

1

HONDA CIVIC TYPE R

PRICE: £50,050

Forget the slightly traditional setup of our 2022 Car of the Year, Honda's Type R follows the original hot hatch template fairly slavishly but it has kept it feeling brilliant fresh. The electric ones have a lot of work to do if they want to compete

Aimed at: purists

OR YOU COULD HAVE ONE OF THESE...

2

TOYOTA GR YARIS

PRICE: £44,250–£60,000

The best Toyota ever? It really could be. This first version was a hoot to drive – fun at all speeds in all weathers. Updated one gets more bhp and an auto

Aimed at: cognoscenti

3

HYUNDAI IONIQ 5 N

PRICE: £65,000

The hot hatch for the computer games generations is rammed full of gimmicks, but is still able to back it up where it really counts – on the road

Aimed at: gamers

4

ALPINE A290

PRICE: £TBC

It's a pincer movement – the old R5 Turbo was an OG hot hatch and the A110 is one of the best sports cars of the modern era. Thankfully the A290 is quite good

Aimed at: sentimentalists?

5

FORD FOCUS ST

PRICE: £37,705–£42,905

Practically Jurassic these days, but with the top notch driving controls and overall experience this old stager can still show the youngsters where to go

Aimed at: budget purists

CROSSOVERS

TG TIP
Entry level **Air** trim comes pretty well equipped – just go for the bigger battery

1

KIA EV3

PRICE: £32,995–£43,895

The Kianaissance continues apace, with an intriguing small electric effort that's finally delivering some of what we want from EVs. It's stylish, full of interesting details, about as fuss free as electric motoring gets and efficient too

Aimed at: punctual adopters

OR YOU COULD HAVE ONE OF THESE...

2

DACIA DUSTER

PRICE: £19,695–£23,695

If you're going to go back to basics then you really need to nail those essentials, which the Duster has managed effortlessly into its second generation

Aimed at: bargain hunters

3

VOLVO EX30

PRICE: £32,850–£44,850

The EX30 is full of Scandi cool and delightfully simple to live with. Space is admittedly tight in the back, but the interior quality makes up for it.

Aimed at: stylish families

4

FORD PUMA

PRICE: £26,350–£33,600

The UK's official bestseller has taken on the torch of the Fiesta as a decent little car with solid appeal across the board. Just don't mention the old one

Aimed at: everyone

5

HYUNDAI KONA

PRICE: £26,040–£32,740

Korean carmaker's bold design streak continues with the latest Kona, which remains a solid family car. EV's a great first toe in the electric waters

Aimed at: number crunchers

LUXURY SUVs

TG TIP
P510e hybrid is the way to go – in **Vogue SE** trim it's all the Range Rover you'll ever need

1

RANGE ROVER

PRICE: £104,025–£192,000

Arguably the original lifestyle SUV, the Range Rover has evolved massively since the 1970 original, developing into a luxury beast. The latest one hasn't just nailed the brief, it has set the benchmark for everyone else to follow

Aimed at: cash buyers

OR YOU COULD HAVE ONE OF THESE...

2

VOLVO EX90

PRICE: £96,255–£100,555

The old XC90 was starting to get left behind, but the new EX90 has wrestled its way to the front of the post SUV queue while remaining as charming as ever

Aimed at: polo necks

3

FERRARI PUROSANGUE

PRICE: £313,360

Ferrari says this definitely isn't an SUV, but ironically with its sporty credentials it's probably the most SUV out of all the SUVs that have ever been made

Aimed at: posers

4

ROLLS-ROYCE CULLINAN

PRICE: £298,800–£342,600

Even Rolls-Royce had to follow the money and make an SUV. Fortunately you can't see what it looks like from the back seat – that's the place to enjoy it

Aimed at: old money

5

BMW iX

PRICE: £70,985–£124,605

This tech-laden electric SUV takes a different approach to luxury – it's still comfortable, but it dazzles with interesting materials and nice touches

Aimed at: tech VPs

OFF-ROADERS

TG TIP
An entry level **90 S** for us at £55k, then we'd go a bit crazy on the options list

1

LR DEFENDER

PRICE: £58,310–£160,800

The classic Defender was one of those cars that everyone had a strong opinion about, but no one was really buying. A tough job, then, renewing an icon for a modern age. The latest Defender isn't a mere upgrade, it's a fresh take on the four-by-format

Aimed at: school run mums

OR YOU COULD HAVE ONE OF THESE...

2

TOYOTA LAND CRUISER

PRICE: £74,995–£79,995

It's not as attractive as the Defender if you live in, say, Wimbledon, but the retro latest Land Cruiser has all the necessary off-road credentials if you don't

Aimed at: peacekeepers

3

MERCEDES-BENZ G-CLASS

PRICE: £136,690–£203,595

The looks of the G-Wagen are the same as they've ever been, but that masks the progress that's been made under the skin. The new electric one is fun

Aimed at: original gangsters

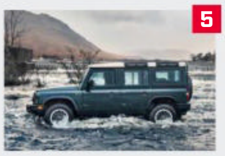
4

FORD RANGER

PRICE: £35,130–£62,557

Like a good pair of jeans, the Ranger is able to switch seamlessly from work to play, no wonder it's a trades favourite. A little bit large for parts of the UK though

Aimed at: sole traders



5

INEOS GRENADIER

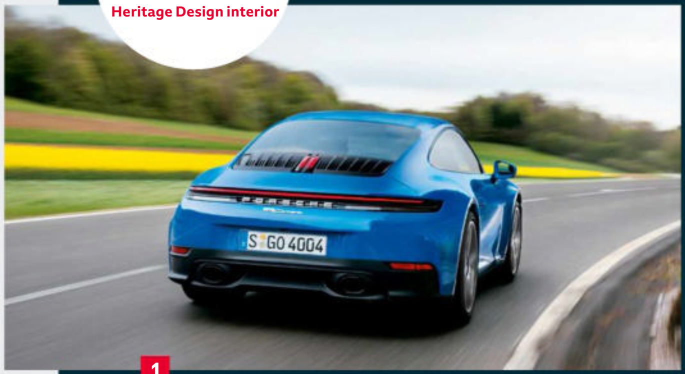
PRICE: £51,931–£79,140

A passion project from a rich old billionaire who wanted a modernised version of his compromised old 4x4. Fair enough, seems to have managed it

Aimed at: old rich men

SPORTS CARS

TG TIP
Into driving? Carrera T. For everyday use, it's the base Carrera with Heritage Design interior



1

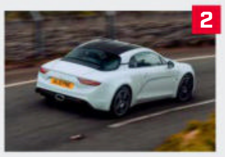
PORSCHE 911

PRICE: £99,800–£139,100

The definitive sports car, despite its inherent layout flaws, because it's been ruthlessly honed millimetre by millimetre over the past 70 years by people who really know what they're doing. Newly facelifted 992.2 version even has a hybrid option

Aimed at: heavyweights

OR YOU COULD HAVE ONE OF THESE...



2

ALPINE A110

PRICE: £54,490–£91,940

This stripped down French number has managed to take up the baton for feathery, beautifully handling sports cars since Lotus gave up trying

Aimed at: lightweights

3

TOYOTA GR86

PRICE: £32,495

The back to basics sports car is destined to be a future classic, and it's one of the best cars that Toyota's made (but it's no GR Yaris)

Aimed at: purists

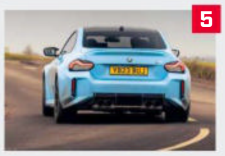
4

PORSCHE 718 CAYMAN 4.0

PRICE: £75,300

Sure, it's getting old, but the Cayman is one of those compelling driver's cars that we need to celebrate while they're still allowed to be on sale

Aimed at: B-road blasters



5

BMW M2

PRICE: £65,915

The latest version of the BMW M2 is more grown up than it used to be, but doesn't that apply to us all? It's a great daily driver that grows on you over time

Aimed at: wealthier purists

SUPERCARS

TG TIP
Don't have the £6,250 super lightweight carbon seats. Regular buckets are much better

1

McLAREN 750S

PRICE: £244,760

Launched in 2023 as a successor to the 720S, McLaren really stepped it up with this car – it's better to drive than its predecessor, but crucially it's also better to sit in and easier to operate. It even comes with Apple CarPlay...

Aimed at: rich Shanghai drivers

OR YOU COULD HAVE ONE OF THESE...

2

FERRARI 296 GTB

PRICE: £241,550

People got nervous when they heard this Ferrari supercar would be a V6 hybrid... they needn't have worried, it all serves to make it a better drive

Aimed at: self-made business people

3

LAMBORGHINI REVUELTO

PRICE: £446,742

There's hybrid tech in there, but there's also a socking V12 in what could very well be the best Lamborghini since the iconic 1960s Miura

Aimed at: high rollers

4

PORSCHE 911 GT3 RS

PRICE: £192,600

You've got to be a good driver to get the most out of the GT3 RS's repertoire, but Porsche has thrown everything it has at this racer for the road

Aimed at: amateur racers

5

McLAREN ARTURA

PRICE: £189,200

The conservative exterior serves to hide some big developments under the skin – ssh, but the Artura might even be a better daily driver than the 296 GTB

Aimed at: brave buyers

HYPERCARS

TG TIP
It'd be sacrilegious to change anything on Gordon's car, but he'll paint it how you like

1 GMA T.50

PRICE: £2.8 MILLION

Gordon Murray had already done it all with the McLaren F1 back in the 1990s, but you always sensed he had a bit more to prove. And here's the result, the car that shows lightning doesn't just strike twice, it'll do it exactly where Gordon tells it to. "The last great analogue supercar" was what Gordon Murray promised – and he's delivered it with relentless attention to detail and a dedication to the end prize. With the electric era almost upon us, we'll probably never see the likes of this pure, undiluted V12-powered monster ever again. It's not just the sum of Murray's knowhow and experience distilled into a ruthless hypercar, you can get something out of it without being an F1 driver, it's an enjoyable drive for whoever happens to be behind the wheel. Your move, everyone else

Aimed at: loaded enthusiasts

OR YOU COULD HAVE ONE OF THESE...

2 PAGANI UTOPIA

PRICE: £2.2 MILLION

In a truly utopian society we'd all be driving one of these. It's not bad for a third car – easy to forget that Pagani's been very discerning about its model lineup

Aimed at: tech billionaires

3 ASTON MARTIN VALKYRIE

PRICE: £3 MILLION

The 'F1 car for the road' line has become a bit of a cliche, but the Valkyrie is certainly visceral and noisy enough to be considered that way

Aimed at: rich collectors

4 KOENIGSEGG JESKO

PRICE: £2.9 MILLION

Well it's named after the boss's dad, so it had to be a good car – and it is. Certainly worthy of a pat on the head, well done son

Aimed at: Monaco residents

5 BUGATTI CHIRON

PRICE: £3.2 MILLION

If the Veyron was the Volkswagen Group's moonshot, the Chiron reaches for the stars at warp speed. How do you follow this?

Aimed at: old money

BEST COMPANY CAR

BMW 330e

PRICE: from £46,985

Lots of life is filled with uncertainty, but along with death and taxes, you can always depend on the suitability of a BMW 3-Series when it comes to choosing a company car. Especially in taxman friendly PHEV guise, this is a great runabout workhorse for business or pleasure

Aimed at: the M40

BIG FAMILY CARS

TG TIP
It only costs £500 extra to go for the **7-seat** over the 5-seat model – a no brainer

1

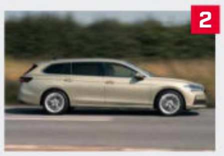
VW ID.BUZZ 7-SEAT

PRICE: £59,545–£67,945

The ID.Buzz is not merely another retro face (that's the sugar on the electric pill), in many ways it's an innovative bit of family transport, especially in its seven-seater guise that finally releases the practicality the car needed

Aimed at: lifestyle families

OR YOU COULD HAVE ONE OF THESE...



2

SKODA SUPERB ESTATE

PRICE: £34,875–£48,540

This car has always had to be good with a name like that, but it's hard to think of any other family estate out there that does a better job for the money

Aimed at: posh families

3

BMW i5 TOURING

PRICE: £69,945–£99,995

You wait ages for an electric family estate and then a brilliant one comes along all at once. Shows off all of BMW's electric knowhow and body control wizardry

Aimed at: the outside lane

4

HYUNDAI SANTA FE

PRICE: £46,775–£57,635

Stylish, well built, comfortable and quiet – not to mention loads of room inside for carrying people and stuff. Hyundai's hot streak continues

Aimed at: sensible families

5

DACIA JOGGER

PRICE: £18,295–£23,995

The Jogger is a masterpiece of cutting out the unnecessary (weight *and* money) while maintaining the fundamentals of a useful family estate

Aimed at: clever families

GRAND TOURERS

TG TIP
Got a dog? Aston's got you – the **Pet Pack** throws in a bed and a portable washer

1

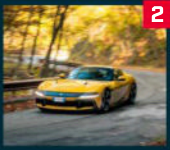
ASTON VANQUISH

PRICE: FROM £330,000

The Vanquish has been reborn – sounds a little grand, but the latest version has brought the car right up to date for its third incarnation. It mixes an exciting drive with genuine grand touring ability in a way that must have all its rivals quaking

Aimed at: secret agents

OR YOU COULD HAVE ONE OF THESE...



2

FERRARI 12CILINDRI

PRICE: £336,500

Ferrari has softened the edges off the 12Cilindri's forebears to create a car that's probably the most capable all-rounder to have come out of Maranello

Aimed at: loafer wearers

3

BENTLEY CONTINENTAL GT

PRICE: £152,820–£257,700

If you had to drive really far there's probably no car you'd rather be in than the Continental GT. Except maybe a chauffeur driven Phantom of course

Aimed at: pipe smokers

4

PORSCHE 911 TURBO

PRICE: £200,600

The 911 range is like one of those Italian gelaterias with hundreds of flavours – seems excessive, but we love them all. Turbo might be the pick of the bunch

Aimed at: daily drivers

5

MERCEDES-AMG GT COUPE

PRICE: £164,905–£191,745

The new second generation GT has developed into a great all-rounder, a usable day to day car that straddles the line between mainstream and exotic

Aimed at: sharp suits

Mr Nippy
·171UYP·
Mr Nippy

CAN YOU SAVE THE STIGVERSE?

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HOW TO...

Rebrand your car company

It's quite a difficult proposition, rebranding your storied car company, especially when you're burdened with over 100 years of heritage. But you want to get with the times, don't you? Obviously the reason that sales have dwindled down to nothing is not because the product is old and you haven't kept it fresh in line with prevailing demands, it's because you're not hip enough. Certainly there's a school of thought that believes younger customers wouldn't be seen dead in a car unless a warring LA-based rapper has been papped in it.

The first step is to look outside the company. Sure, you've got people who have worked there forever and know the brand inside out, they might even love it, but you want an outside eye. An expensive outside eye. The sort of outfit that's turned Tom Cruise into an international treasure. Actually, maybe not that expensive. You'll quietly put the process out to tender, which is a bit like buying wine in the supermarket. You definitely don't want to go for the most pricey bottle on offer, but you certainly don't want anyone to see you going for the cheapest one on the shelf. You'll end up with an agency that has slides going down to reception, a complimentary juice bar and a dazzling slogan like 'we make dreams' (all lower case). Its team of visionaries (their word, they're all wearing bright white trainers that look like they've never been outside) will present you with a vividly coloured slide deck that makes love to the back of your eyeballs. You've no idea what it actually says, but it's empowering you with mission statements and power slogans and you're excited about changing the world for the better.

You say yes, that's the only job you have in all this, apart from signing the cheques (metaphorically – no one uses actual cheques anymore, maybe that's why you're in this mess). What no one tells you about the branding business is that it's universal – the product is almost immaterial, which is why the resulting explosion of online videos, sizzle reels, social media teasers and whatnot could apply to perfume, a pop band, budget TV channel, dog food or a public health campaign for condoms.

Sure, there's a lot of criticism of the new brand, but actually that's good, because people are talking about it. Champagne all round, because that's the one old fashioned thing that branding people really do like. A job well done then... but wait, you're forgetting something. Oh yes, the cars.

> **"It's quite difficult when you're burdened with over 100 years of heritage"**

WORDS: SAM BURNETT **PHOTOGRAPHY:** GETTY

F1RST MOTORS
AERODYNAMIC ART
Silhouette of Speed
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Mclaren Speedtail
1 of 106

NEW FORMENTOR
321 NLD

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CUPRA

Official fuel consumption for Formentor e-HYBRID range mpg & litres/100km combined: 470.8 (0.4) – 706.2 (0.6). Combined CO_2 emissions 9 – 13 (g/km). Figures shown are for comparability purposes; only compare fuel consumption figures with other vehicles tested to the same technical procedures. Figures may not reflect real life driving results. Data correct at 22/08/2024.